



THE INVOCATION

Issue 2 Summer 2009

INVOCATION

The Invocation E-Zine is a quarterly published E-zine produced by VampireCounts.net. and its members.

Editor:

Disciple of Nagash

Contributors:

Disciple of Nagash

Swissdictator

MasterSpark

Dark Sheep

Arion

Danceman

The Pale Lady

Count Flapula

Front Cover and Artwork:

Ophidicus

Layout:

Disciple of Nagash and MasterSpark

All models in this issue are from members of Carpe Noctem as noted by the username under the relevant picture.

This E-zine is completely unofficial and in no way endorsed by Games Workshop Limited.

The Chaos devices, the Chaos logo, Citadel, Citadel Device, the Double-Headed/Imperial Eagle device, 'Eavy Metal, Forge World, Games Workshop, Games Workshop logo, Golden Demon, Great Unclean One, the Hammer of Sigmar logo, Horned Rat logo, Keeper of Secrets, Khemri, Khorne, Lord of Change, Nurgle, Skaven, the Skaven symbol devices, Slaanesh, Tomb Kings, Trio of Warriors, Twin Tailed Comet Logo, Tzeentch, Warhammer, Warhammer Online, Warhammer World logo, White Dwarf, the White Dwarf logo, and all associated marks, names, races, race insignia, characters, vehicles, locations, units, illustrations and images from the Warhammer world are either ®, TM and/or © Copyright Games Workshop Ltd 2000-2008, variably registered in the UK and other countries

INVOCATION

Contents

Greetings from the Perverted One Editorial	4
Grave News	5
To War! Basic Tactica – Artefacts of Death Part 1	7
Themed Army List – Von Carstein	14
Army Showcase	18
Dark Art – Zombie Painting Guide	33
Golden Bat Competition Results	41
User Projects	47
Special Character Design Rules Advanced	55
A Fitting End Graphic Novel by Ophidicus	63
To War! Advanced Tactica – Combat Orientated Army Lists	68
Fixing Vampire Counts: Necromancy Spells	80
Battle Report	83
The Children of Maat Story	97
What's in the Next Issue	121

GREETINGS FROM THE PERVERTED ONE

Editorial

A warm and bloody greeting to issue #2 of the Invocation.....

Well first I want to thank all those that gave feedback on the first issue. We received many praises which made all the effort put in seem worth while, but just as importantly we received some constructive criticism, and we have listened to it.

So this issue should be improved on the first with a huge battle report complete with some pictures and diagrams, improved layout and formatting for the entire magazine, and few other things that should hopefully make reading the Invocation all that more enjoyable. However if you see anything that you think we can improve on then make sure you tell us!

It is also a bittersweet issue, in that as well as the various amounts of good news we have in the continued success of the user projects and competitions, we also have a piece of news which I'm sure many of the members of Carpe Noctem will be saddened by. However I will leave it up to the person themselves to say, which you can read in the news section.

As for the rest of the issue, well all I can say is wow. The various contributors have again surpassed themselves with some helpful and informative articles, as well as some brand new artwork by Ophidicus. On that note I should mention that we welcome anyone who wants to contribute to the Invocation. So if you have artistic flair, have an idea for an article or some other suggestion then please feel free to contact me on Carpe Noctem.

Carnal blessings to you all.

Disciple of Nagash

GRAVE NEWS

The Latest News on Carpe Noctem by Disciple of Nagash

Master Vampire Parts with Carpe Noctem

Yes unfortunately the title is true. The founder and creator of Carpe Noctem is leaving but rather than me, here is his goodbye in his own words.....

“Hi all,

I've seen Carpe Noctem grow and grow. It has been a child to me. It was my idea in the first place. Its first name was Castle Sylvania... which wasn't a very good title. The forum eventually died but I swore to the members that I'd make a new one. CN MK II was born. It was a free forum based on Invisionfree. We didn't have our own address in the way we now have. And again we started from scratch. It was the time that the Blood Keep still was a big forum. I've never felt any competition with them, because I found that both forums had a different member base and attitude towards the community.

It has been a dream to have a forum as big as the Blood Keep. CN still (un)lives on, next to the Blood Keep. I'm happy with what it has become. I've reached the point where I have fulfilled my goal: to make a big VC forum made by me. It makes me proud.

Alas, since the goal has been fulfilled, I became aware how much I was actually doing with the hobby itself. It's a big fat zilch nowadays. I've outgrown the hobby, I guess. From one side, it's sad because it's a part of my youth. From the other side, it's time to head into adulthood. It's not that Warhammer cannot be combined with adulthood but through my own experience, I've found that good memories should be left alone.

I've had that with old video games. In my memory, they rock the block. But when I install them on my PC and play them again, I seem to find bugs and irregularities which make the game not any fun at all. It has disrupted my view of the game.

Hence, I will leave Warhammer as it is. I've got some good memories with Warhammer. I really liked thinking about it. How it would be to live in such a world and not in the reality we've got now. Maybe that was the way how I escaped reality. In that sense, it has played an important role in forming myself.

What I'm trying to tell you all, is that I have to part ways with CN, the members and the hobby itself. Although I have been away before for some time, I feel now that I won't come back. Of course, I will peek around the corner from time to time but I won't be active anymore. I haven't been active for over a year or so, I've mainly been trying to fix forum issues and moving it over to the new host.

I would like to conclude my departure by thanking all who make up this wonderful community. Thanks to the new Admin, Disciple of Nagash, who will now run the forum. Thanks to MasterSpark, Skaramak von Carstein, Voltaire, The Dark Sheep and Vekarin The Dark Bladed for their Mod-duties. Thanks also to all who have been moderators or in any way helpful to make CN a better place.

Cheers and have fun on CN!

~MV”

New Moderators

Since the last issue of The Invocation we have had some changes in the moderator team at Carpe Noctem.

I am sad to say we have lost Ergo-Sum as our To War! (tactics) moderator. However we have found a more than suitable replacement in MasterSpark. Regulars will already know MasterSpark thanks to his swift replies and in-depth posts, and with the two tactical articles in this issue written by him, you can easily see he has some great advice to give.

Another moderator to step down was The Dark Arts (Painting & Modelling) moderator Josef. However he nominated someone who has more than risen to the challenge – The Dark Sheep. A superb painter (damn him!) whose article in the first Invocation was form favourite and looks set to continue that trend in this issue.

Finally we have a man who really needs no introduction to the long term members of Carpe Noctem – Voltaire. After a respite he has returned to Carpe Noctem as our Chronicles of Death (Background and Stories) moderator, and if his writing in the Vampire Council role-play is anything to go by, he have some great experience to share in that area.

Email Notification

First I would like to apologise to all our members. As you all know we had problems with our host limiting the amount of outgoing emails, meaning that the notification function stopped working. However we have taken steps to rectify this, and as such we have now moved to our brand new host. The problem should be fixed by the end of September, and by then everyone should start receiving emails to subscribed topics or personal messages again. If for any reason you do not please send me a PM on Carpe Noctem.

Golden Bat Summer 2009 Competition

The GB was a great success, and you can see the results of the competition elsewhere in the issue. A big thanks to all those that made the effort (a special mention to The Dark Sheep for dragging those extra entrants in!), and a reminder that the next competition will be starting on late December 2009, just in time for all those new models you got for Christmas!

Medals

Another apology is in order as the medal system has yet to be implemented. The transition of the host and the recent down time has added to this, however I am now in a position to fix this. The medals can be back dated so once they are implemented, anyone thinking they are missing out can contact me.

Bloodline Armies Play Testers Needed!!

That's right! The work and effort put in on the Bloodline Armies mean it has progressed to the point where we are ready to start play testing the rules, and this is where we need your help.

Play testing is very simple. The new rules fit with the current Vampire Counts army list and composition, and as such you shouldn't have to change your favourite army list. The only thing that changes is that you choose your bloodline powers for your vampires from the rules provided and also amend their stats as per their bloodline.

We even have a list for necromancers if you're one of those that miss them from the 6th edition. If you are interested then please click on this link: [Click Here](#)

THE TEACHINGS OF ABHORASH – BASICS

The Artefacts of Death – An Overview by MasterSpark

The Vampire Counts have at their disposal a large number of potent and useful magical items that they can bring to the tabletop but sometimes it can be a hassle to decide which one/ones will work better with your intended plan and strategy. Therefore we'll provide you with an overview of the available items with comments about their general usefulness and how they stack up with each other. Every section will be dealt with from the most expensive option to the cheapest one. In this first issue we will look through the magical Weapons, Armour and Talismans.

Weapons

Chief amongst these Artefacts of Death is the **Frostblade**. Exclusive to Vampire Lords, this is a weapon of immense power. The Frostblade will automatically destroy any one model as long as you can score a single unsaved wound on it. This makes it a terrific weapon to deal with enemy monsters such as Dragons and Greater Daemons (beware of the magic-weapon-negating Obsidian Armour though) but also any multi-wound units such as Ogres and Trolls. When combined with Red Fury, the Frostblade will let you hew through an entire unit of monstrous infantry in a single turn! However, the weapon's substantial points cost means that it'll be the only magic item that the Lord will be entitled to. Thankfully you will still have access to some basic defensive measures through Avatar of Death or Dread Knight but if this Vampire Lord is your general, a 2+ armour save is rather meagre indeed. Also, it keeps the Vampire Lord at his base Strength 5 which might limit him when fighting some enemy characters and monsters. The Beguile power goes a long way to remedy this, luckily. Anyway, the most efficient way to use this weapon would be to have a secondary Lord choice carry it in a larger game. That way your army won't suffer the effects of a

lost general if he perishes in his attempts at "Frostblading" things.

Next up is the **Dreadlance**, this one also exclusive to Vampire Lords and then only mounted ones. At a cost of just above half of what the Frostblade will run you, the Dreadlance still packs an awesome punch if you're able to get the charge. It also combines very well with certain Vampire Powers such as Beguile (lets you re-roll the failed wounds from your automatic hits) and Red Fury (since you're likely to be putting the hurt on your enemies on a roll of 2+ or more with each attack, this has some real potential for mayhem). The downside to this weapon is, like the Frostblade, its points cost. You'll still have some points left over to provide you with some decent protection but in the way of ward saves you'll have to risk stupidity with the Crown of the Damned which will also take up the remaining points for magical items. Also beware that if riding a monstrous mount, the Vampire Lord will no longer be able to use this expensive weapon if his steed is destroyed and he himself is left on foot. However, the verdict stands that this weapon is indeed worthwhile.

The **Black Axe of Krell** is a weapon that must be wielded by a Wight King. As a great weapon that caused D3 wounds and also forces the survivors to pass a toughness test in subsequent turns to avoid losing more wounds, it will grant the bearer decent offensive prowess. Unfortunately it will limit the defence of your Wight King as it will take up his entire magic item allowance. As a great weapon it will deny him use of his shield, leaving him with only his heavy armour. This will make him quite vulnerable to enemy monsters, which are the thing that the weapon itself is especially

effective at hurting. Alternatively you could also mount him on a barded steed, giving him a 3+ armour save. This will hurt his strength a little bit though, as you will only get +1 to your Strength value from great weapons when mounted. All in all, there are more efficient ways to equip your Wight King and achieve better results.

The Blood Drinker is a very useful tool for both Vampire Lords and Heroes. With each successfully caused wound you'll be able to regain one earlier lost wound from either the wielder him/herself or the wielder's unit. This is exceptionally useful when the wielder leads a unit of tough and expensive troops such as Grave Guard, Black Knights or Blood Knights (especially these last ones) and will take some pressure off of your magic, giving you an opportunity to instead use it elsewhere.

Remember also that newly resurrected models will get to fight in the very same combat phase that they were brought back in, provided that they're placed in the front rank. Its downside is that it will keep the wielder at the base Strength 5 which will make it more difficult to crack the harder foes out there such as cavalry and enemy characters. The Blood Drinker is better suited to battle the enemy infantry where the Vampire's default strength will let it carve bloody paths through them, raising his fallen minions as he goes. The Powers Red Fury, Infinite Hatred and Beguile will all boost the efficiency of the Blood Drinker but at an additional points cost (obviously). Like the Tomb Blade, the power of the Blood Drinker cannot be increased by any of the master powers or the presence of an Unholy Loadstone.

The sword **Skabscrath** (or "**Skabskrath**" as it was called in "Dark Omen") is one of the more seldom used magical items. This is mainly due to the fact that the same effect is available through the Vampire Powers for cheaper, but also because the Vampire Counts have access to no less than three Terror-causing unit entries in the rare category. However it can still find its use in

the hands of a flying Vampire who can swoop in behind enemy lines and force the enemy to take multiple terror tests. The thing to note here is that the Supernatural Horror power would leave the Vampire unable to also purchase Flying Horror and would instead be forced to ride a more compromising Hellsteed, whereas Skabscrath will allow the wielder the safety of moving along with a unit. It is basically an alternative way to cause terror for those who do not wish to spend points from their Vampiric Powers allowance.

The Sword of Kings is a Vampire Counts classic and in this seventh edition of Warhammer it has returned as a very powerful weapon indeed. It can either be given to a Vampire to lend them the Killing Blow special rule, something that is never without use (except perhaps against the Ogre Kingdoms), or it could instead be granted to a Wight King. This is where it gets interesting for in the hands of a Wight King it will boost the potency of the Wight's Killing Blows by 50%, causing them on 5+ instead of on a 6 only. This makes it a phenomenal weapon against both enemy cavalry and characters and well worth the points cost. If a downside would have to be mentioned, it'd be that the wielder would be left at his base Strength and that no amount of killing blows in the world will help him against creatures that are immune to it.

The Tomb Blade is a cool little device that lets the wielder raise a previously lost Skeleton Warrior for every successful wound that he causes on the enemy. However, unless in the hands of a Vampire Lord with the appropriately combat-boosting Vampire Powers (and he really could be doing more than be stuck re-raising his fallen skeleton minions), you're likely to find that the base offense of a Vampire won't make the weapon's effects as impressive as it could be. If you'd instead purchase a weapon that boosted the wielder's offensive prowess you'd be able to more readily kill opponents which would also lead to fewer losses in close combat. The Tomb Blade is certainly not without its uses but there

are better options out there. Also to note is that the Games Workshop FAQ for the Vampire Counts has ruled that neither the Lord of the Dead power nor a nearby Unholy Lodestone will boost the Tomb Blade's effect in any way, unfortunately.

Next we reach the three common magic weapons, the **Swords of Striking, Battle and Might**. Each of these weapons is a worthwhile buy for their low price and will all boost the wielder's close combat efficiency in one way or another. The Sword of Striking will allow you to hit with greater ease (can work well with Red Fury), Battle will grant you an additional Attack (always useful) and Might will increase your Strength (making it easier to wound and punch through the enemy's armour save). These are all good buys and will enable some pretty nifty combinations with other magical items due to their economic cost. Overall, the Sword of Might is often the most effective choice as it will help you in two phases when it comes to hurting your enemy, instead of just one like the others.

For its very modest cost, **The Balefire Spike** is a cheap and easy way to get a source of flaming attacks into your army. As a lance it can work as a (much!) cheaper alternative to the Dreadlance, allowing the wielder to purchase a fair few more magical items to boost him in other ways. Remember that the character will have to be mounted to make use of this weapon. The only true downside to The Balefire Spike is that, as it gives you flaming attacks, it can be ignored and negated by certain units and abilities that render the opponent immune to flaming attacks. Foremost among these are the High Elves and their Dragon Armour. If you expect to fight against the High Elves, then this weapon might be best to leave at home.

Last on the list of magical weapons is the humble **Biting Blade**. At such a low price you really cannot complain about what it gives you. If you have the points left over after loading

your character up with the rest of what you've wanted, and you're not already toting a lance or other such weapon, adding the Biting Blade is never a poor choice. Reducing the enemy's armour save and granting you magical attacks for a one-digit cost is good but chances are that you've already filled the offensive spot with something else.



Model by Markof

Armour

Highest up on the list of magical armours is **Walach's Bloody Hauberk**. This is a very useful piece of protection which will serve its wearer well in all circumstances, providing you with the only ward save available outside of the stupefying Crown of the Damned (and the Talisman of Protection..). It's points cost is the only true downside to this armour. For this reason is it best used on Vampire Lords where it's not expensive enough to negate the character the use of other nifty items.

The Accursed Armour is an interesting artefact. On one side will make the wearer tougher but on the other it'll rob him off some weapon skill and initiative. The Games Workshop FAQ has also ruled that if the wearer also uses the Helm of Commandment, the weapon skill that is passed on will still be affected by this armour. However, if the wearer is affected by the Helm of Commandment from another source, the negative effects of this armour will not apply. Therefore if you can keep this support up, you'll only notice the positive points of The Accursed Armour. It tends to be the most useful on a

Wight King, making the wearer truly tough and resilient. If he's a unit with the Banner of the Barrows, the negative sides to this armour will be further reduced. The downside to this armour is that it forces you into taking these sorts of precautionary steps which may or may not be convenient depending on your list and opponent at any given time. At the end of the day however, the additional toughness makes it worthwhile in most situations.

The Flayed Hauberk is an item that you will always be able to find some use for. It is a very convenient and easy way to grant one of your characters an effective armour save without compromising the ability to create certain combinations with other items and powers. The only possible downside to this item is that there's only one of them to go around!

The Armour of Night will certainly help to keep one of your characters safe from ranged missile attacks that need to roll to hit, provided that he/she's on foot. This is especially helpful on Vampire characters that are running or flying around on their own, although the missiles that *do* hit won't have much armour to go through. If combined with the Wristbands of Black Gold the effects of this armour will be that much greater, although the points cost will unfortunately follow suit.

An artefact of great potential, the **Nightshroud** is deserving of consideration whenever you're creating an army list. By essentially giving any who strikes the wearer the "Always Strike Last" special rule (even though it does not officially exist), this will let the wearer attack and hopefully dispose of any would-be attackers. This is especially useful when given to a Wight King with the Sword of Kings but it is also a valuable tool for keeping any Vampire safe from Assassins and the like. A Vampire Lord with this piece of armour will likely be able to whack that dastardly Assassin before he gets a chance to do anything! Anyway, the one downside to the Nightshroud is that it is only a suit of light

armour which will often reduce your total combined armour save. This is indeed offset by the advantages that it confers though. Also, even though it is explicitly permitted, the Nightshroud will not do much good for Necromancers. Although if you are so inclined, placing the Nightshroud-wearing Necromancer right next to a Wight King with the Sword of Kings will let the Wight King take a whack at whatever attempts to hit the Necromancer before they got to swing. This, however, is not the most effective use that you can get out of the points spent. Really.

Killing blows are bountiful in the Warhammer world of today but luckily we have the **Cadaverous Cuirass** to counteract them. At a cheap points cost it will render the wearer immune to the additional effects of killing blows and poisoned attacks. This is a very good buy for your general if you intend for him to partake in any close combat situation. There are really no downsides worthy of mentioning – it is a good buy!

The **Enchanted Shield**. Old Reliable. At the same points cost as the Cadaverous Cuirass, the Enchanted Shield will also rarely disappoint you. It works very well with the Avatar of Death power as it will grant you a 2+ armour save in close combat, provided that you choose the shield option and that you're not using a magical weapon to deny you the armour boost you get from using a hand weapon and shield. It'll also do you good if you're a Dread Knight, boosting your already serviceable 2+ save to a 1+ while still leaving plenty of points open for other items.

Talismans

Exclusive to Vampire Lords, **The Carstein Ring** is a powerful trinket that'll let your Lord come back to unlife on the roll of 2 or more after he or she has been destroyed once. The prerequisite for this is that there must be a unit which the Vampire Lord can join, so you should not choose a flying mount in addition to this ring lest the wearer will be removed as a casualty. Anyway, while **The Carstein Ring** is certainly a good thing to have around if your Lord is killed, the points spent on it could instead go towards making sure that it won't come to that situation in the first place. Making use of it means that your Lord (who will likely be your general) will have to get him/herself killed which is not a healthy approach to the game. It could theoretically be used as a diversion where you lure a portion of your enemy's army into a trap with your Lord and then have him teleported away when he falls but it is still a plan full of risk. The possibilities are there but the alternative ways to go about it are there also!

The **Crown of the Damned** is a peculiar item. At an affordable cost it provides the wearer with the very best ward save available to the Vampire Counts, at the cost of suffering the effects of stupidity. The only character choice that would truly benefit from this is a Vampire Lord, whose Leadership value is high enough to mitigate most of the stupidity tests you'll get to take, whereas a hero Vampire will suffer from it roughly half the time on average. A Wight King is also a candidate but he should not be in need of a ward save, they're not that vitally important. Anyway, the downside to this item is painfully obvious – stupidity! While a Leadership value of 10 will not suffer from it that often, losing control of your very army general at any given time could be disastrous. However, there's not much to do about it if you're looking at fielding a combat Lord and also fancy having some additional protection against certain dangerous things such as **Killing Blows** through the use of the **Cadaverous**

Cuirass. For the points it is a good buy but you should beware the risks of stupidity. It will most often be worth the while but every now and then it *will* strike at you with terrible consequences, potentially losing you the entire game.

When it comes to defending a character from ranged attacks you'll need to look no further than the **Wristbands of Black Gold**. These will give the wearer an admirable protective measure against any and all ranged attacks for an economic cost in points. Unfortunately, this effect does not extend to the character's mount nor the unit he is with, which makes it less than generally useful. The downsides to choosing this piece of equipment is essentially that it'll not protect the wearer at all in close combat and that it takes up the Talisman slot which could otherwise be used for other ward saves. It could be combined with Walach's Bloody Hauberk to defend the wearer in all possible circumstances but that'd eat away at your points allowance in a rather steep fashion. A good buy for the right user, this is.

The **Gem of Blood** is another useful item for consideration. This will give the wearer a once-per-battle solid chance at quick retribution against whichever enemy that manages to land the first wounding hit of the day at a not too prohibitive points cost. Unfortunately, this little device can backfire on the wielder, making no use of itself at all while causing an additional wound to the wearer, this time without any armour saves allowed. This item should not be put on any character model with less than three wounds as it could spell their immediate demise if you roll poorly. There's also the risk that the first wounding hit that lands on the wearer will be one from a lowly foot soldier, where the rebounding wound won't make much of a difference (or could potentially harm the wearer!). All in all, there will often be an out-and-out more efficient use for the points that this item will cost you but it is still not without use. Shaving off an additional wound from an

enemy character or monsters could prove very important at times!

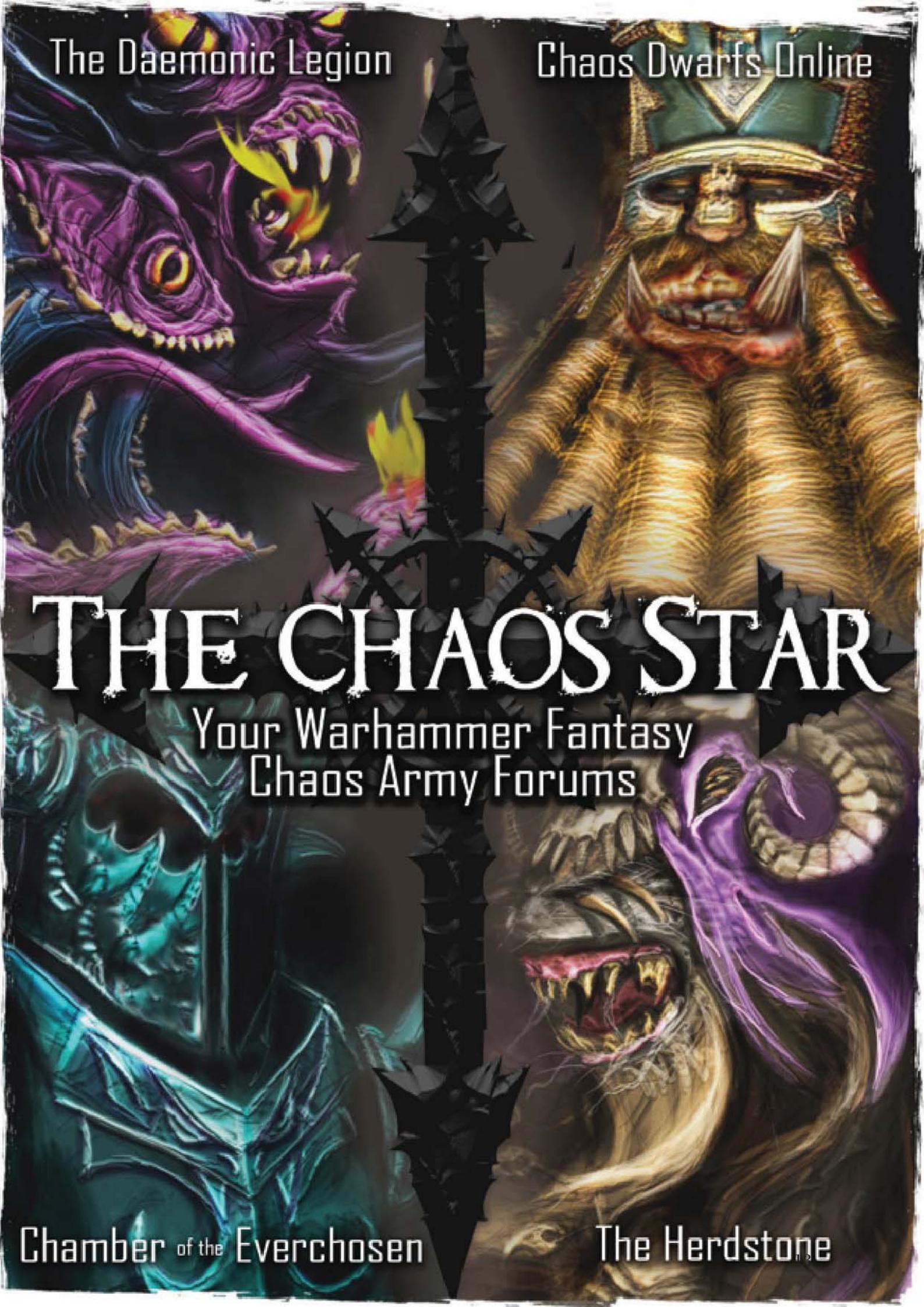
Last in this section comes the **Talisman of Protection**. While it comes at a more than reasonable cost, a 6+ ward save will often fail to perform when you need it the most. If you have the points to spare and haven't given your character any other form of ward save (and can't afford a better one), then this one could be of use. You never know when you'll roll those strings of sixes. The Talisman of Protection is never useless but unfortunately, it is never reliable either.

...and that is all that we'll bring you for this issue. In the next one we will look into the other sections that make up the **Artefacts of Death**. Stay tuned!



Minibucket.com

Model by Sama3l



The Daemonic Legion

Chaos Dwarfs Online

THE CHAOS STAR

Your Warhammer Fantasy
Chaos Army Forums

Chamber of the Everchosen

The Herdstone

LEGIONS OF THE DAMMED

Creating a Themed Vampire Counts Army by Swissdictator

Building a Themed Vampire Counts Army

This is the first in a series of articles that I intend to write on how to build armies themed to either specific blood lines, or events, in the Warhammer world. These articles are intended as *guides* within the rules of the current army book, so that you can use these freely without concern for legality or asking opponents permission. They may also include modelling suggestions in order to better convey the theme in appearance as well.

How this works, is I will outline restrictions on powers and/or items as appropriate for the theme. This may be simply prohibiting certain items, or restricting the use of certain items to certain characters.

The first of these guides is for an army out of Sylvania, under the banner of a Von Carstein Vampire. These armies are by far perhaps the most infamous due to their proximity to the Empire and the Von Carstein wars. It is also requires little to no conversion, depending on how you want your skeletons to work. They also offer the most background material to work with, making it very easy to find inspiration or even something to represent with your army. For example, my army will largely be based on the Vampire that worked with Gotrek and Felix in “Vampireslayer”.

The Vampire powers should reflect the nature of the Von Carsteins, they are a sort of happy median of the Vampires. They have some military skill as well as arcane, and tend not to over specialize in either with perhaps the notable exception of Konrad Von Carstein. They are also socially adept, their courtly manner giving an eerie presence to them.

Army List Restrictions

None of the Vampire powers from “The Severed” and “The Bestial” may be taken, as these are very much the opposite of what it means to be a Von Carstein Vampire. The Von

Carsteins often rule kingdoms with many of the living still tilling their fields, and providing the Vampires their much needed blood. They may often be found in the various Empire courts so it is in their interest to maintain a pleasant mask. Konrad may come with Infinite Hatred, but he is also very atypical for the Von Carstein blood line as he is quite insane!

The Arkayne powers are sometimes used by the Von Carsteins to maintain control over a powerful undead force with which they may use to achieve their ancient ambitions. A Vampire Lord may take Master of the Black Arts or Forbidden lore, but not both. Any Vampire may take Dark Acolyte.

Vampires under “The Martielle” can be fitting for a vampire of the Von Carstein line. Avatar of Death is available as these Vampires might seek to sate their thirst and lead the battle in the front lines, so the option of having armour or other weapons is befitting for a Vampire with such an approach to battle. Some Vampires may intend to lead heavy cavalry into the enemy to enjoy in the fear and terror that such a dread charge that the Dread Knight brings, thus the power is available as well.

Vampire powers under “The Courtly” are all available to the Vampires in such an army. While they equally fit Vampires of the Lahmian line, the Von Carsteins also are experts in statecraft and thus have become quite adept at manipulating their victims. Intimidation as well as seduction both are useful traits in politics, and the ability to terrorize your opponents or render them vulnerable are also both valued skills on the field of battle as well.

The Von Carsteins are likely to be skilled at summoning the undead that tends to fill their ranks, so they make take “Summon Creatures of the Night” as they often call upon Dire Wolves or Bats to harass and chase down softer enemies. They may also take “Lord of Dead” as many legions of skeletal troops are often seen flying the banner of a Von Carstein. They may not

take “Summon Ghouls” however, as they tend to look with distaste towards these foul creatures.

When it comes to unholy artefacts they may never take the Flag of the Blood Keep as that banner is Blood Dragon in nature, nor may they take the Royal Standard of Strigos as that is a symbol of the wretched line known as Strigoi. The Helm of Commandment may only be taken by a Wight King, for they might be ancient commanders who once led the troops of Lahmia where the Helm originates from. The Cursed Pennant of Mousillon is also prohibited as the cursed city is far enough from the lands of Sylvania.

As for units, the Varghulf is prohibited, for it is far too bestial to be fitting for the ranks of the Von Carsteins. The Blood Knights are of a different bloodline entirely, and may not be fielded either. Ghouls are largely limited as they tend to come in very small groups to perhaps feast on the corpses of the victims of the Von Carsteins battles, only 10 may be taken for every full 1,000 points available. For example, in a 2250 game you may field 20 ghouls. The Ghouls also do not count for minimum core requirements in this guide. So you must still field Zombies and/or Skeletons!

Wights are often chosen as the bodyguard for the Vampires of this blood line, be it the ranks of Grave Guard providing great security and an intimidating foe to face should one seek the Vampire in battle. They may prefer the thundering charge of Black Knights, to roll the flanks of their enemies. You may take a unit of Wights (Grave Guard or Black Knights) per Vampire Lord and Wight King you have in the army.

You must field at least one skeleton unit per Vampire Lord. While Zombies may be a large part of the armies of the Von Carsteins, Skeletons are not an uncommon sight as well. You may, of course, field more units if you so desire.

Zombie Dragons and Hellsteeds may not be fielded. The Zombie Dragons require great magical prowess to control and does not seem to be seen amongst the ranks of Sylvania's

damned. Hellsteeds also seem somewhat odd for the Von Carsteins, as they are typically shown amongst their hordes of troops be it infantry or cavalry, and a Hellsteed would make this image impossible.



Model by Bonegnasher

Making Themed Models

Modelling suggestions are also important as they can also help sell the theme even more than the army roster itself but when these two are combined they can make for an army that has a solid theme that is conveyed strikingly well on the tabletop. It would be wise to use Empire bits in the army. For example, while the Zombies are fairly Sylvanian already, mixing in Empire militia pieces might add to the variety of poses allowing for a less uniform and more hordish look that is befitting zombies.

Skeletons, if you can green stuff some tattered uniforms on them of Empire state troops, or give them appropriate head gear this can help. Alternately you can give them Imperial banners that are faded/torn. Giving them a more uniform colour scheme in what clothes and armour they have can help sell it too. These should be slightly uniform, but not quite completely. For example one might have say red trim and black as the main colour, another might have those two switched around. Purple is actually one of the main colours for a Sylvanian livery, so it may be advised to use purple.

Wights should be very uniform in appearance, despite the ancient armour that they wear. They should still look ancient, but they should seem as having been uniform before time decayed them.

Spirit Host could be any number of choices. In the 6th edition Vampire Counts book there was an undead Empire themed Vampire Counts army, and it used (older) Flagellants for spirit host. This could certainly look disturbing, but you could use any number of other infantry figures from the Empire line if painted to appear as ghosts.

Finally the Black Coach, it is highly recommended you field one as it really goes for the more classical Vampire Counts look and is very fitting for the Von Carsteins. Take care to paint this figure nicely, as it stands out in and of itself. Therefore a high quality paint job can go a long way towards making the army look high quality.

For Vampires, I'd recommend trying to acquire the older Vampire figures of the Von Carstein bloodline for use as characters. The other option is to use the current Von Carstein family as well.

Included to the right is a list made using the guide in this article. The list may not be optimal, but it is certainly competitive. It is a list which will require some strategy and thought, but it is still very forgiving. The list was made with a 2250 points game in mind.

Characters

Vampire Lord

~Level 3 Wizard Upgrade
~Blood Drinker, The Flayed Hauberk, Crown of the Damned
~Aura of Dark Majesty, Lord of the Dead, Walking Death

Wight King (BSB)

~Sword of Kings, Nightshroud

Vampire

~Walach's Bloody Hauberk
~Dark Acolyte, Lord of the Dead

Vampire

~Tomb Blade, Dispel Scroll
~Avatar of Death (Shield), Lord of the Dead, Summon Creatures of the Night

Core

24 Skeletons

~Full Command
~Warbanner

24 Skeletons

~Full Command

20 Zombies

~Musician, Standard Bearer

5 Dire Wolves

5 Dire Wolves

Special

23 Grave Guard

~Full Command, Hand Weapons/Shield
~Banner of the Barrows

4 Fell Bats

Rare

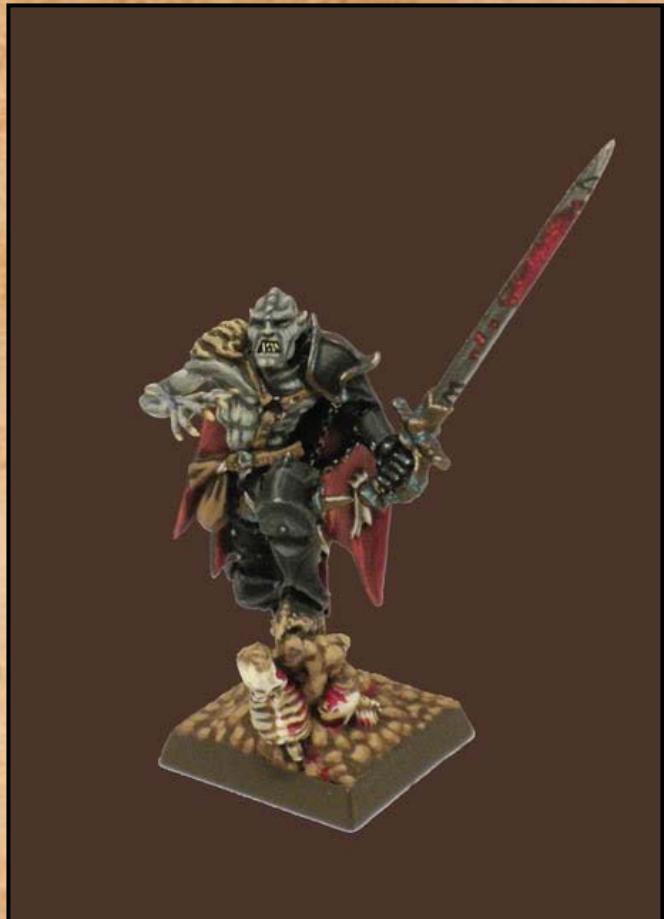
Black Coach

The General and his Wight King bodyguard are deployed with the Grave Guard, making for a very solid block for the general to fight from. The Wight King can take challenges from particularly nasty opponents, and shoot for a killing blow as most nasty challenges will be toughness 5 as it is, and therefore require a 5+ to wound already. This allows the general to remain safe for longer and deal more damage. Between his armour and ward, the Lord will be otherwise very resilient and with Blood Drinker in his hands he can easily keep the Wight King at full 'undead'. The unit will also be able to fight with their exceptional armour and toughness, thus making it harder for opponents to simply try to slaughter the unit and hope that the ensuing crumbling takes out the general.

An opponent could avoid this unit, but would likely have to face skeleton blocks which will be hard to destroy with all of the casters having Lord of the Dead. Plus with the points invested in the Grave Guard unit, he'd be denying himself a lot of potential victory points.

With the ability to bulk up the Wolves or Bats as well, these fairly cheap units will be even more of a menace when they become larger. The cheap investment in the Summon Creatures of the Night will quickly be paid off with as little as one or two successful casts of Invocation on these units.

The list is fairly strong in magic, albeit not as strong as some Vampire Counts lists seen these days. However, with the Master Powers, magic is still very effective.



Model by Crimson

UNHOLY MASTERPIECES

Carnivale de los Muerto by Devo

Regulars on Carpe Noctem will be very familiar with Devo and his various works. With a weird and wonderful imagination, and a skill for converting and painting, Devo's armies have always been a fantastic sight. However there is one army that I think stands out above all the rest and that is the superb Carnivale Dio de los Muerto.

A vampire army with a Mardi Gras -slash- Dio de los Muerto theme, every single model has been converted and painted in rich and vibrant colours. It really does look amazing, but enough of me telling you what it looks like, I'll let Devo's own words and pictures speak from themselves.....

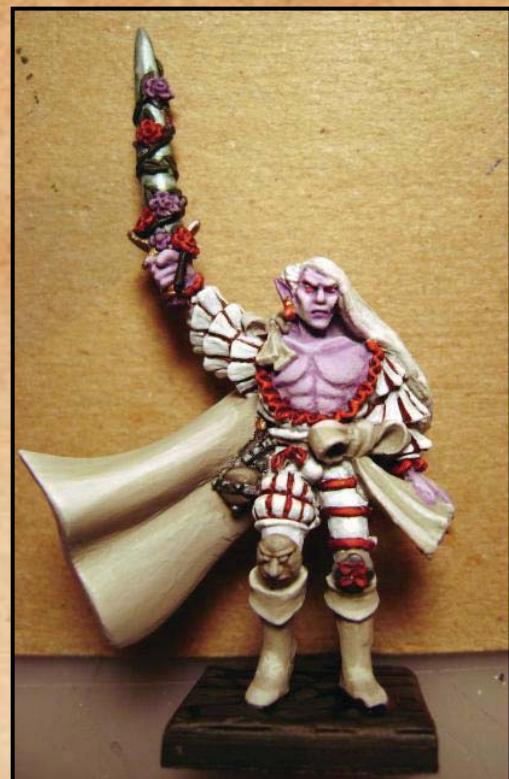
Disciple of Nagash



UNHOLY MASTERPIECES

Carnivale de los Muerto by Devo

Vampire Lord



“You can see now why I chose to paint him white. He stands out fairly well, I think. That's important to me, as I don't want to "deceive" my opponent by hiding my vampires”



UNHOLY MASTERPIECES

Carnivale de los Muerto by Devo

Standard Bearers



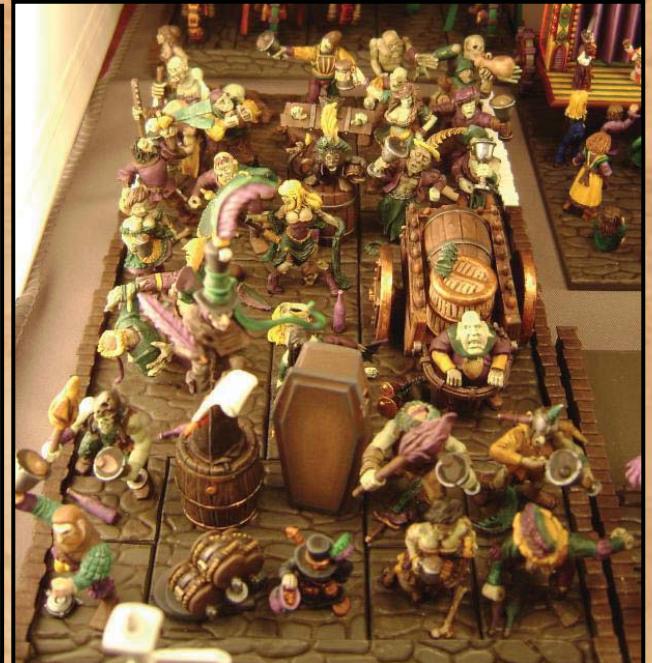
“My BSB is standing on the corner of Bourbon St. and Lost Way.”



UNHOLY MASTERPIECES

Carnivale de los Muerto by Devo

Drunken “Zombie” Revellers



“So, my zombie unit is headed up by someone selling “Dead Man’s Ale”. The rest of the mob is a mix of rowdy drunkards, some poor victims of the poisoned brew, and a few zombified celebrants. They’re all green-ish of skin and red-rimmed eyes after getting sick on the Dead Man’s Ale -- and they all have pink noses and cheeks.”



UNHOLY MASTERPIECES

Carnivale de los Muerto by Devo

Skeleton Krew



“So these are my skeletons. More specifically, people in skeleton costumes. You know those cheesy skeleton costumes you see at Halloween? Yeah, those.”



UNHOLY MASTERPIECES

Carnivale de los Muerto by Devo

Ghoul Clowns



“The ‘fairy’ clowns are my champions, as I needed something that looked the same in both units, but were distinct. Actually, the best part about painting these was imagining the guy who had to train the ghouls to act like clowns”



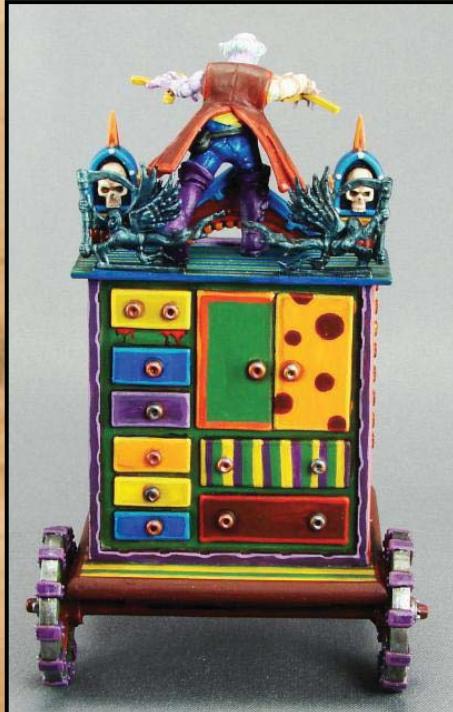
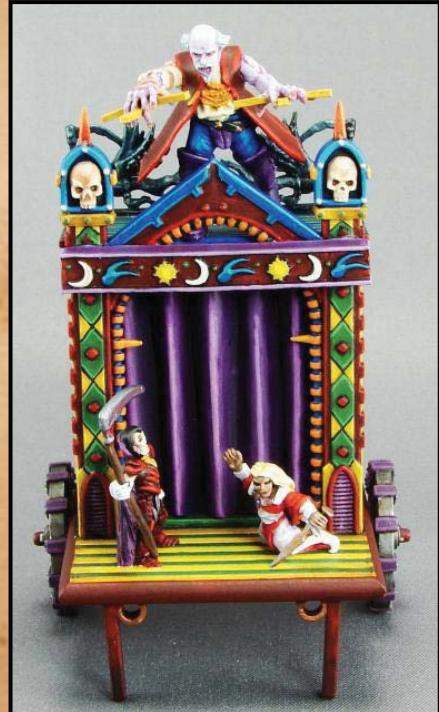
UNHOLY MASTERPIECES

Carnivale de los Muerto by Devo

Corpse Cart



“The necromancer -- The Puppet Master -- is drawing in and mesmerising the children. Why be evil if you can't start them young? This one shows the story the puppets are playing out fairly well. The human bowing before her new undead master. Here, she's addressing the crowd, bemoaning that she ever fought against such a powerful master. On the back you can see the Puppet Master's ‘Special Drawer’”



UNHOLY MASTERPIECES

Carnivale de los Muerto by Devo

Bat Swarms



“The first idea for these guys came from Raindog on another forum -- a fact that I appreciate, as I was sort of stumped on how to put these in my army. To work these into my theme, then, I have peddlers selling evil puppets, evil kites, and evil balloons. I wanted to add a little “danger” to the scene, though, so I’ve got a couple of balloons carrying a baby off. Oh, those evil balloons.”



UNHOLY MASTERPIECES

Carnivale de los Muerto by Devo

Grave Guard



“The Masquerade. My “fancy ball” party-goers. The sole requirement for getting into the Masquerade was having a mask or a fancy ball gown. Some have both!”



UNHOLY MASTERPIECES

Carnivale de los Muerto by Devo

Black Knights



The Humans

If you look carefully, you'll see a foot on a pedal beneath the saddle of these models. This is the "knights" real foot. The other leg is part of his costume. It works just a little better in person.

The 'Pumpkinhead' Cairn Wraith (Hell Knight)

The wraith is not disguised, per se, but his horse is -- disguised as a bicycle. It didn't turn out quite as well as I think it could have, but I'm a bit short on wheels, and I was trying to take a shortcut by using only one. It works well enough, however.



UNHOLY MASTERPIECES

Carnivale de los Muerto by Devo

Fell Bats



“

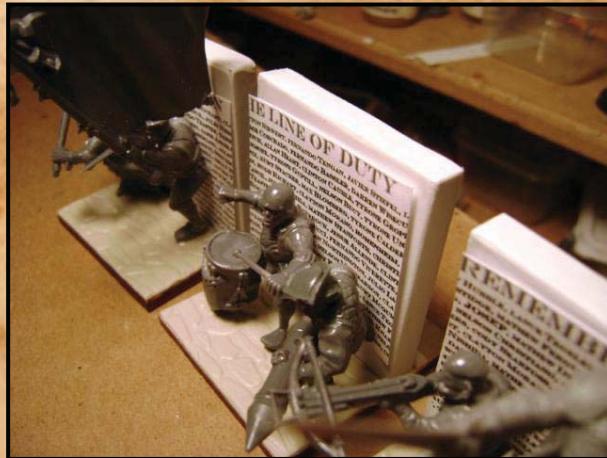
“She's green! Stay tuned for the yellow one, the purple one, and the mixed-colour bat.”



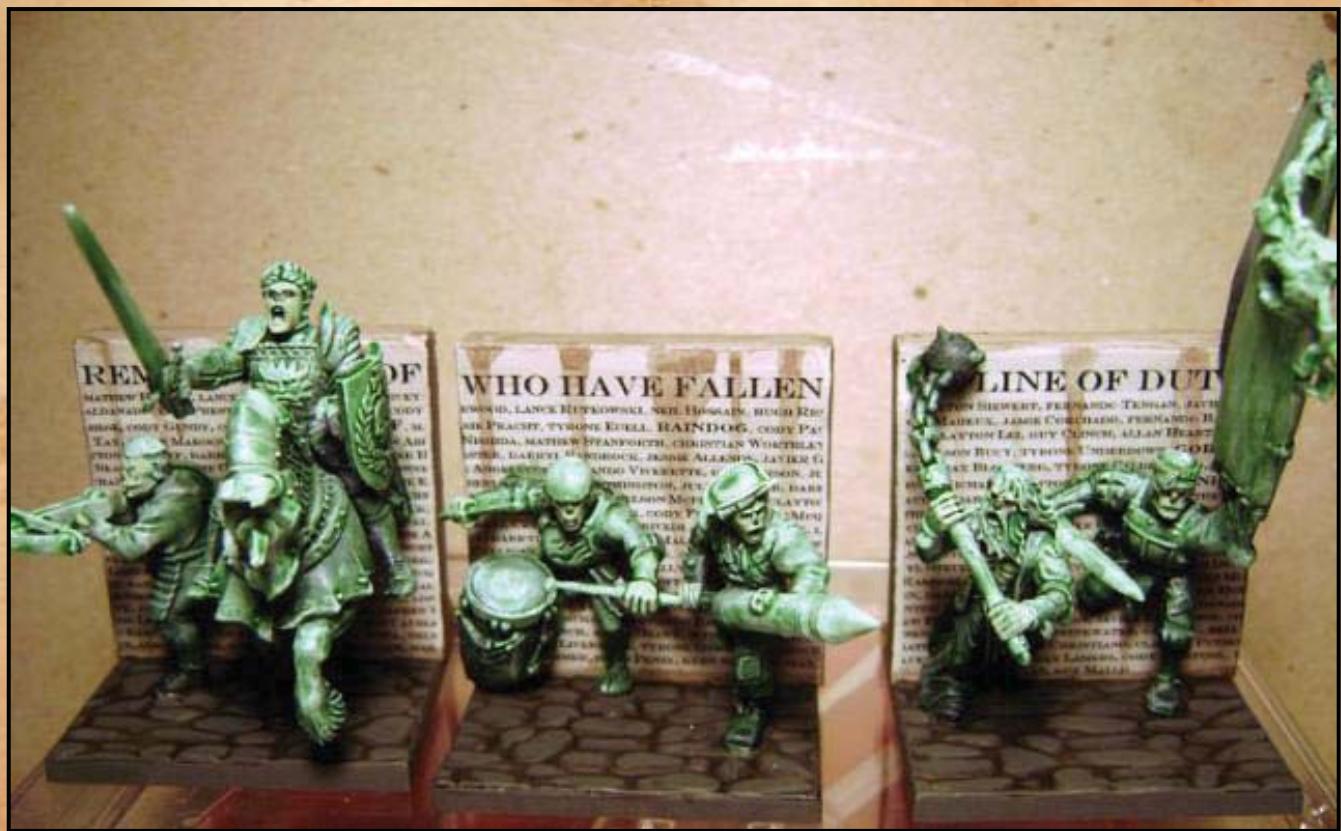
UNHOLY MASTERPIECES

Carnivale de los Muerto by Devo

Spirit Hosts



"I can't say that this is a novel idea, but it fits so well into the theme that I had to do it. And I like how it turned out. Strangely, this fits into the army visibly worse than any other single piece, but it fits the background better than any other piece. (The Carnivale, if you remember, is a celebration honouring the fallen dead.)"



UNHOLY MASTERPIECES

Carnivale de los Muerto by Devo

Varghulf



“I suppose the idea that fits best is some giant, killer clown. Varghulf's cause terror, you know.”



UNHOLY MASTERPIECES

Carnivale de los Muerto by Devo

Black Coach



"I love this guy. He makes me giggle every time I see him. There's just something about Sophet Drahas throwing candy out to the little children that makes me laugh I'm not sure why, but I've wanted to dub this mini the "King of Fools" since the beginning, so I put that label above his head, there. I guess I watched the Disney Hunchback of Notre Dame one too many times"





THE DARK ART

Zombie Painting Guide by The Dark Sheep



Models by Karez

Wherever an undead army marches, death will always follow in its wake. Innocent civilians and experienced soldiers alike, they all suffer the same fate. While some corpses are picked clean of flesh by the scavenging ghouls, most will be resurrected to fight again as zombies.



Models by Karez

The Skin

You will need the following paints: Dheneb Stone, Devlan Mud, Thraka Green, Skull White.

Step 1



Dheneb Stone was painted as a basecoat over a Chaos Black undercoat. When painting skin it is important to keep in mind that the paint should make a smooth layer of colour that covers well. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to use quite a bit of water. When using thinned down paints, not even the use of foundation paint is enough to get the wanted effect, so you might need to apply two layers to get a good coverage.

Step 2



A mix of Devlan Mud and Thraka Green in a 3:2 ratio was used to tint the bright base colour into a greenish brown. Again it's important to work with smooth layers when painting skin, so take extra care when applying the wash, and make sure that the paint does not pool up in unwanted places. Zombies tend to be in different states of decay, something which can make one zombie's skin vary greatly from another's. This can easily be represented by making small changes to the original mix of washes. This could be as simple as to add or deduct one part Thraka Green, or you could even try experimenting with different colours.

Step 3



To get the skin back to its pale self, the skin was highlighted with pure Dheneb Stone. By choosing the same colour for the highlight as you do for the basecoat, the skin will get an overall harmony that will be practically impossible to obtain in any other way.

This model was repeatedly dry brushed very lightly with a stiff, short bristled brush in order to get the appearance of old skin that has started decomposing. If this approach is taken it is important to be careful or else you will end up obscuring the shading, gained from the wash.

Step 4



A final highlight was applied over the skin area to increase the contrast between the dark, sunken crevasses and the pale, stretched skin. This highlight consisted of a 1:1 mix of Dheneb Stone and Skull White and was carefully painted along the various edges and raised features of the model. Places such as the face and around the wounds might need some extra attention in order to stand out more on the model. These places are after all places of interest and by making them just a little bit brighter, the model will be that much more appealing.

Details

You will need the following paints: Mechrite Red, Baal Red, Badab Black, Leviathan Purple, Bleached Bone, Gryphonne Sepia

Every zombie with a bit of self respect will be covered in various grotesque details. Be it open wounds with exposed innards, maggot-ridden patches of skin or just the occasional boil it will be necessary to know how to treat them.

Open Wounds



I started out by applying a coat of Mechrite Red. This was shaded with a mix of Baal Red, Badab Black and Leviathan Purple in a 3:3:1 ratio. This wash was mostly distributed in the recesses, but I allowed it to flow out towards the edges of the wounds in order to create definition.

The next step is to highlight the raised areas with a mix of Mechrite Red and Bleached Bone. What you want is a nice, pink colour, so mix in a lot of Bleached Bone. Use this to highlight raised areas or to paint fine lines on exposed muscles.

Maggot Holes



To give the sickly appearance of juices running from these little holes I washed them with Gryphonne Sepia twice. By applying large drops of wash to each individual hole, they will naturally overflow, and you'll get the effect of puss spilling from the wounds. Make sure that the wash runs downwards instead of in every direction as this will look more natural

Boils



The boil was done in much the same way as the maggot holes. It was soaked in several layers of Gryphonne Sepia and while the paint was still wet, I made sure that most of it was left around the base of the boil.

The thing about Gryphonne sepia that makes it well suited for this is that a thick layer will dry up dark orange, while a thin one will look yellow (as opposed to Thraka Green or Asurmen Blue which only dries up in different shades of the same colour). Thus make sure that you use quite a bit.

The Face



Unlike the skeleton from the last issue, the zombie has facial features that need a bit more attention. The eyes and teeth are the most noticeable of these.

Personally I think that bright, white eyes looks great on undead models in general, but by tinting them a little bit with a wash you can really make them pop. This was easily done by dotting out the eye ball with white, wash it with the preferred colour (I used a very dark green) and then dot them out again with the same white.

Clean, white teeth will look out of place on a model ridden with decay, so I wanted the feel of yellowed, rotten teeth. I achieved this by first picking out each individual tooth with skull white and then washing them with Gryphonne Sepia.

Exposed Bone



Some Zombies have exposed bone sticking out of wounds etc., and this is a good opportunity to tie your zombies together with your skeletons. Simply paint the bone in the same way as you do your normal skeletons (check out the previous article to find out how I did mine).

Finishing off the zombie

You will need the following paints: Chaos Black, Skull White, Calthan Brown, Badab Black, Devlan Mud, Khemri Brown, Boltgun Metal, Gryphonne Sepia, Mithril Silver, Scorched Brown.

A zombie model also consists of areas that are not flesh and here I will touch upon how to paint things like clothes, leather wrappings, wood and rust. This part of the article should be treated more as a guideline though, as most people have their own techniques and colour schemes.

Clothes



I decided that the clothes on this particular model should be dark grey, so I started with a basecoat of Chaos Black. This was then highlighted with brighter greys.

When working with black and dark grey it is always a good idea to mix your own colours. This is because the premixed colours often contain a hint of blue. By adding Skull white to the Chaos Black you can easily control the outcome of the colour.

Leather



To get a dry and old effect on the leather areas I base coated both the belt and the wrappings with Calthan Brown. This was then washed with a 1:1 mix of Badab Black and Devlan Mud. Finally a 1:1 mix of Khemri Brown and Calthan Brown was carefully dry brushed over the leather. If you are not comfortable with controlled dry brushing, an alternative is of course to use the layering technique.

Wood



To keep in theme with the leather, I decided that the wood should be dry and old as well. Scorched Brown was used as a basecoat on the wooden supports. Then a mix of Scorched Brown and Khemri Brown mix was carefully painted in thin lines over the basecoat. This was slowly worked up to pure Khemri Brown.

Rusted Metal



Both the scythe and the chain mail was base coated with a thin layer of Boltgun Metal. Then I applied large drops of Boltgun metal to the scythe and allowed them to dry for a while. As soon as the small drops of paint were covered in a thin film of dried paint, I burst the bubbles and smeared the thick paint around. This was repeated several times until the scythe blade had a nice, rough texture. Then I gave both the scythe and the chain mail a heavy wash of a 1:1:2 mix of Devlan Mud, Badab Black and Gryphon Sepia. To bring back the appearance of metal, an extreme highlight of Mithril Silver was applied to strategic areas.



Other Skin Tones

Even though green is the way many choose to go when they paint zombie skin, it doesn't necessarily mean that it is the only way to paint dead flesh. On the following models I have used the exact same technique when it comes to the skin, but I have replaced the Thraka green with other washes.



For this model I used Leviathan Purple



For this model I used Asurmen Blue



For this model I used Gryphonne Sepia

GOLDEN BAT PAINTING COMPETITION SUMMER 2009

Winner - Fester d'Archelioux by The Dark Sheep



GOLDEN BAT PAINTING COMPETITION SUMMER 2009

2nd Place – Blood Dragon on Foot by Yahoo



Well, as you can see by these superb pictures, our Golden Bat Competition Summer 2009 was a huge success. We had 21 entries and I could not help but include all of them in this issue as the effort put in was simply astounding. You can see the other lovely models on the following pages.

The rest of the forum joined in as well, casting a total of 76 votes to choose the top two models, and I can say they chose very well.

The Dark Sheep's entry *Fester d'Archelioux* was a wonderful example of well executed highlighting and shading, as well as paying attention to small details. The result was a model with a realistic pale skin tone and weathered armour that is fantastic.

The second place was won by the domineering Blood Dragon model as shown on the banner below. It sports some of the best lacquered armour ever seen on Carpe Noctem, and it was a close battle between this and The Dark Sheep's entry. It was also some of the nice additions that made this model stand out just a tad more, such as the freehand on the blade and the glowing eyes of the pet dragon.

So I present my congratulations to both, as their models now form the new banner for Carpe Noctem!

Disciple of Nagash



GOLDEN BAT PAINTING COMPETITION SUMMER 2009

The Entrants



Azazel



Capt Rubber Ducky



Cpiiardina



Cpt_Fluffy



Dreadlord



Fallen Angel



Fosere



Goggalor

GOLDEN BAT PAINTING COMPETITION SUMMER 2009

The Entrants



Hosko



Josef



Midean



Oronare



Someguy



Subber45



Timmy MWD

GOLDEN BAT PAINTING COMPETITION SUMMER 2009

The Entrants



Lambobolt



Malchus Von Carstein



Ophidicus



Sibbechai

CARPE NOCTEM



JOIN US IN UNDEATH AT:

WWW.VAMPIRECOUNTS.NET

USER PROJECTS

The Vampire Council Roleplay

Well it seems that the first report of The Vampire Council captured some of your imaginations, as we have had quite a bit of interest since then.

In that time the Council has continued with its adventures, and the overall story keeps on growing and growing, until the point where it truly feels like an epic.

As before, we still gladly welcome new members, especially if you are a dedicated poster. So if you would like to join (and you don't have to be a vampire to do so), then please visit us by clicking on the following link: [Click Here](#)

As I promised in the last issue, here are the summaries of The Vampire Council chapters up to chapter 29.

Chapter 16 - Allies and Enemies

As the force from Karak Eight Peaks arrives back at Nexeternus it is attacked by a surprise assault from Merovich and Magneqrox. The first push is devastating to Nexeternus, decimating Simon's forces and damaging his fortress. It looks dire until the rest of the council return from hell and lends their power. Merovich, after being bested by Mircea, bites and turns Mouse. Her enraged grandfather attempts to kill him but he manages to flee the battle on the back of his Wyvern. In the midst of battle Arkhan suddenly appears and kidnaps Mistress Lesa. Meanwhile Simon is crippled by a collapsing wall whilst Milosh battles and eventually defeats Magneqrox, with the help of a new vampire Anya, who disappears as quickly as she appeared. The council eventually prevail but at a horrific cost. After learning of his wife's capture Milosh sets off after her. A new arrival in the form of the skaven Sammael offers his assistance in locating the Black Tower of Arkhan, in the hope of rescuing Lesa. Simon and Mircea however decided to instead head off in search of the fabled Carstein Ring.

Chapter 17 - The Beginning of the End

Milosh receives a message from Arkhan, telling him to go to a location on his own or Lesa will die. He eventually finds his wife tied and bound, suffering mutilating tortures. The Dread Lord then proceeds to torture the pair, using their feelings for each other against them to try and make them reveal the Claw's location. The pair manages to resist but eventually Arkhan delivers an ultimatum - tell him or Lesa dies.

Chapter 18 - The Kingdom of Sand

After Milosh's disappearance Vekarin and other members of the Council decide to attempt a rescue of Lesa. Sammael provides them the Black Tower's location, as they believe this is where Lesa would be held. The assault on the Black Tower is far from easy, as the formidable defenses manage to hold back the vampires. Eventually some of the Council manage to break through, breaching the lower levels only to find Arkhan, Milosh and Lesa are not there. The sudden appearance of a Tomb Kings army, hell bent on vengeance against Arkhan, forces the vampires to retreat, however not before Sammael, Rowhaine, Reshorn and Katie are mysteriously teleported to Quatar.

Chapter 19 - The Land of Chill

Valda makes a reappearance in Naggaroth, seeking to meet with an old Dark Elf ally. The Witch King learns of the vampire's presence and has him captured. After learning of Nagash's possible return he is released, to work with the Witch King's forces to stop the Dark Lord's return. He is gifted with a new arm, and works closely with Lady Darkmane.

(Following summaries thanks to Sweeney Todd)

Chapter 20 – The Hunt for the Ring

Simon and Mircea prepare to set off to claim the fabled Carstein Ring and are joined by Vyacheslav, a fellow Von Carstein and Cerberus, a mysterious stranger who is barely accepted as an ally. The Carsteins (without Cerberus) set off to claim the Ring but after doing so are attacked by the witch hunter Franz von Malksing and his warband. In the ensuing battle the witch hunter and his allies are eventually driven off but Simon is slain and Mircea seizes the Von Carstein Ring.

Chapter 21 – The Red Duke

The Red Duke dispatches Merovich to summon Dragos, another of his gets. Emissaries of Mannfred von Carstein meet with the Duke and an alliance is forged.

Chapter 22 – Lord of the Dead, Lord of the Earth

Mircea returns with the Von Carstein Ring to Nexeternus as the von Carsteins begin to increase their territories in the Border Princes. A Dwarven host marches to oppose them and make camp in a mysterious abandoned city in preparation for battle. An undead army led by Mircea lays siege to the city and wipe out the dwarves with the aid of Beleera, a black cat with powers of the mind.

Chapter 23 – The Dark Lord Awakes.....

Milosh returns the Claw of Nagash to its rightful owner in exchange for his and Lesa's freedom but he is seized for experimentation by Nagash's minions. Arkhan the Black sets off to reclaim his master's crown while the spirit of Simon von Carstein accompanies Milosh in captivity for a while before disappearing.

Chapter 24: Desert Diplomacy

Waking up in the city of Qautar, Sammael, Reshorn, Rowhaine and Katie are tasked with uniting the Tomb Kings due to a prior debt owed by Sammael. First they are forced to travel to Lybaras where an unknown faction has overthrown the Liche Priests and is seeking to destroy Queen Khalida. In the following battles Rowhaine is forced to confront the beast within him, and after besting a champion of Ptra has his vampiric curse lifted and is gifted with the gods' blessing to become his new champion.

Chapter 25 – The Battle for Sylvania

The coalition of the Red Duke and Mannfred, wielding the Crown of Nagash, clashes with the amassed forces of the Vampire Council in an epic battle for control of Sylvania. Valda joins the battle on neither side, aiming to seize the Crown of Nagash for himself. The coalition has the upper hand but the sudden intervention of Rask, with the stolen dwarven artifact, turns the tables. The artifact negates Mannfred's magic, forcing him to flee from the attentions of Rask's Skaven horde. Without Mannfred, the Red Duke and his knights are likewise forced to quit the battle in the face of the combined might of the entire Council. Lesa pursues Mannfred and spots him together with Arkhan. Consumed by hatred she attempts to destroy Arkhan but he escapes and Mannfred is obliterated by a magical blast that spirals out of control into apocalyptic proportions. She survives only through the sacrifice of her attendant daemon. Vekarin returns to the Violet Citadel while the rest of the council heads to Drakenhof.

Chapter 26 - Drakenhof

The Council enters Drakenhof and meets Simon once again, who now possesses the true Carstein Ring. New allies join and plans are made. The Council sets off in an attempt to infiltrate Nagashizzar to rescue Milosh.

Chapter 27 – The Chase for the Crown

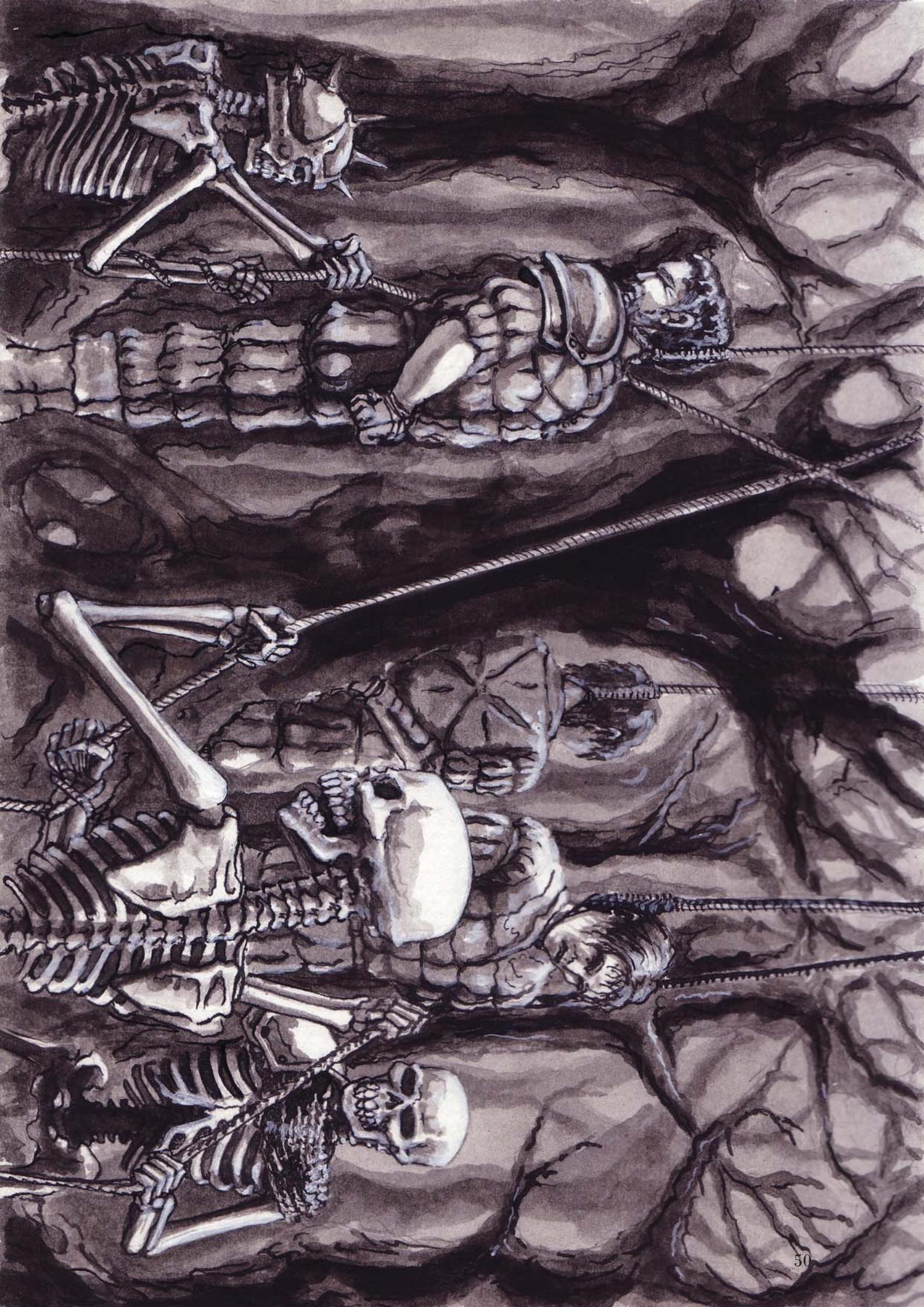
Valda and his retinue give chase to Arkhan as he escapes with the Crown of Nagash. He is eventually caught and brought to battle. Lesa watches overhead as Valda and Arkhan duel. Arkhan is triumphant in the end and the arrival of the other Dread Lords force the rest to flee.

Chapter 28 – Sneaking Mission

The Council attempts to stealthily enter Nagashizzar from underground to rescue Milosh, and as they begin they meet Erick von Strauss, a vampire noble opposed to Nagash. He joins the Council as they penetrate further into Nagashizzar. Along the way they encounter Malachi, a captive Necrarch who tells the Council of the secret of Nagash's power. The Council splits into two, one group following Malachi to the mysterious secret, while the other continues on the original mission. The two groups are confronted by several Dread Lords who slay Malachi and are forced to regroup and flee.

Chapter 29 - Siege

Several Dread Lords of Nagash lead a legion of their undead in a surprise attack on the Violet Citadel. With the advantage of surprise they manage to completely bypass the outer wall where fighting ensues. The rest of the Council rushes to reinforce the Violet Citadel but despite their efforts the Citadel is destroyed, and its master Vekarin is slain in single combat with the Executioner, one of the Dread Lords. The unexpected intervention of the Red Duke and his forces allow the Council members to escape once again.



USER PROJECTS

The Legion of Nagash

In the last three months this project has really come on in leaps and bounds, only thanks the hard work that a lot of members have put in. We are now over three quarters complete in designing the rules, and I can see in the upcoming future the time when it will be ready for play testing.

So what are we working on at the moment? Well after finally finishing and having the hero level characters voted through the main ongoing threads are creating the mounts for the Legion, and also working on the special characters, the Nine Dreadlords of Nagash. As we have already created the rules for Arkhan the Black that leave us just the eight to design. We have decided to use the backgrounds created for the Dreadlords Carpe Noctem's other user project, The Vampire Council. If you want to join in and help design the rest of the rules, or if you want to start play testing, visit the Legion of Nagash at this link: [Click Here](#)

As usual, here is a taste of the rules we have been creating:

The Lore of Nagash

To randomly generate a spell from the Lore of Nagash, roll a D6 and consult the chart below. If you roll the same spell twice for the same Wizard, roll again. A Wizard may automatically substitute one spell for *Whispering Spirits* if he does not generate it randomly. All wizards in the Legion of Nagash automatically know *Possession* in addition to their normal number of spells.

D6	Spell	Casting Value
0	Possession	4+
1	Whispering Spirits	5+
2	Visions of Doom	6+
3	Land of the Dead	7+
4	The True Gaze of Nagash	9+
5	Curse of Reanimation	10+
6	The Great Awakening	12+

Possession - Cast on 4+

Through the eyes of his servants the Lord sees all and punishes those who defy his rightful might. From the first book of the Cult of Nagash, Chapter 16, verses 11-12

This spell can be cast on any undead model within 18". For the remainder of this magic phase the caster counts as standing at the targets position for casting any additional spells. If the caster suffers a miscast the target suffers the effects as if were the caster with the exception that if the result is to lose a magic level or spell, the caster loses that as normal.

Whispering Spirits - Cast on 5+ Remains in Play

At His command the power of our Lord commands His immortal spirits, and they fill the thoughts of his foes with words fear and undermining. All who stand in their path are rendered powerless, such is the might of our Lord.

From the second book of the Cult of Nagash, Chapter 12, verses 4-6

Target one of the enemy units within 18". When successfully cast, this spell removes all psychological effects with the exception of stupidity, even if caused by magic items. This includes the army specific rules such as Cold Blooded. The unit must also use its stat base Ld for all Ld tests and may not benefit from the Battle Standard. Undead / Daemon units affected by this spell will break instead of their normal rules. Once this spell is stopped / dispelled, Undead / daemon units automatically rally.

Visions of Doom - Cast on 6+

The Lord of the Dead stretched out His hand towards His foes, and gifted them a vision of their demise. All who saw it quaked and fled, and the Lord was pleased.

From the second book of the Cult of Nagash, Chapter 5, verses 17-18

This spell can be cast on any point within 24" that is within the wizard's line of sight. Once cast, all units within D6" of that point must take an immediate (unmodified) leadership test or flee away from the spot.

Land of the Dead - Cast on 7+

Who dares stand against Him, when the spirits of the land conspire to keep His foe at bay?

From the first book of the Cult of Nagash, Chapter 8, verses 9-10

Target one enemy unit within 24". Once cast, the enemy unit halves any movement it makes (including flying movement or fleeing) until the start of the casting player's next turn.

The True Gaze of Nagash - Cast on 9+ Magic Missile

His gaze fell upon them, and He judged them. Damned in His sight, their flesh abandoned them, and they became dust.

From the fifth book of the Cult of Nagash, Chapter 9, verses 6-8

This is a *magic missile* with a range of 24", If successfully cast, the Gaze of Nagash hits its target and causes 2D6 Strength 5 hits.

Curse of Reanimation - Cast on 10+

Pity the fool who comes against our Lord, for their souls are forfeit and their lives His for the taking. From the third book of the Cult of Nagash, Chapter 3, verses 12-14

The Curse of Reanimation may be cast on any one unengaged enemy unit within 24".

If successfully cast, it causes D6+4 Strength 4 hits, with no armour saves allowed. Any models killed by this spell are immediately raised as zombies and placed in BtB in front of the affected unit. They are ranked up as per the normal BRB. In the following combat phase they count as charging, and any Ld or break tests the affected unit has to take for the remainder of this turn are at -1Ld. (Due to the unnerving nature of their comrades attacking them).

From this point on the zombies are classed as a normal unit worth 25VP.

The Great Awakening - Casting Value - 12+
At His command the dead will rise. Those thought broken will be whole and even those who fought Him in life will be welcomed in death.

From the fifth book of the Cult of Nagash, Chapter 7, verses 7-9

Once this spell is cast, every undead unit you control automatically regains the following number of wounds:

Core - D6+3

Special - D6

Rare - D3

Characters (not in units) - D3

In the case of core units, this can create additional models above the number the unit started with, whereas in the case of another units it can only bring the unit back to full strength. This can also heal undead characters as noted above, though it will not work if they are specifically within a unit unless there are excess 'healed wounds' to be passed on, in which case they can only a maximum of 3 wounds may be passed on. In the case of mounts, roll D3 each for the character and the mount.

USER PROJECTS

Bloodline Armies

The Bloodline Armies project is perhaps the one where most people have got involved, perhaps due to the nature of the project. After all it is about the vampires!

Since the last report this project has made the most progress with all the bloodline powers now successfully voted through.

After consideration we also decided to create a similar option for the much missed Necromancers, to myself and many others they were just as interesting and important. It did require a little out of the box thinking, and some designs from scratch, however considering many of us also work on the Legion designing brand new rules was something we knew all about.

So in the end we decided to create a lord level Master Necromancer, along with a full range of powers known as Familiars. The idea was to make it so a full Necromancer army could be taken that was feasible and wouldn't result in a useless army, and I think we did it.

We still have much to do, such as created Bloodline tailored army lists, and Bloodline special characters, so if you want to join in, then follow this link:

Playtesting

As noted above, now we have finished designing the powers, we need them playtesting. We need you!! See the news section for further details.

Necromancer Familiars

Lacking the innate powers of the powerful vampires, Necromancers are forced to resort to other measures to control the dead. Many summon attendant spirits or daemons which support their foul masters as commanded

Entrancing familiar - 60pts

This familiar weaves a thread of flickering lights around the necromancer, which entrances his enemies in a web of confusion.

At the start of the enemies turn nominate one enemy unit. This unit must take a leadership test following the normal rules & modifiers. If passed this has no effect. If failed the unit must make a compulsory movement (following the normal movement rules) in a direction decided by the Necromancer player. This may include a charge into an enemy unit that is within the unit's Line of Sight. This power does not affect units which are Immune to Psychology.

Master Familiar - 50pts

The ghosts that walk the land speak not only of times past, but also of the world of the dead. An astute Necromancer can use this knowledge to increase his control over his minions.

The Necromancer may raise Skeletons, Ghouls, Dire Wolves and Fell Bats past their starting number, and also gain +1 to casting rolls when casting Invocation of Nehek on them.

Warrior Familiar - 50pts

Weak and wizened Necromancers may be, but they are far from stupid. Many have created protectors, constructs bound with warrior spirits to protect them in battle.

The warrior familiar has the following profile:

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld
-	4	-	4	4	2	5	3	-

Save - 5+ Ward Save

Special Rules - Killing Blow

The familiar does not have a base of its own, however as long as it is still "alive" the Necromancer cannot be hurt in combat in anyway. All attacks that would normally hit the Necromancer must be resolved at the Warrior Familiar. Once the Familiar is killed attacks will then be allocated against the Necromancer.

Knowledge Familiar - 45pts

Many wraiths do not have the power to remain substantial, yet they still help their living brethren by whispering them secrets of their long dead knowledge.

The Necromancer may roll for an additional 4 spells from one lore from the Rulebook or the Lore of Vampires. In the case of the Master Necromancer it is automatically assumed they know the 4 remaining spells from the Lore of Vampires if they choose that lore.

Power Familiar - 30pts

Souls of dead necromancers crowd around their living brethren, attracting the winds of magic to them. This can be both a Boon and a curse though, as the spirits seek revenge for their demise.

The Necromancer may take a leadership test at the start of the his own magic phase, if he passes he benefits from Irresistible force on any roll of a double apart from double 1. But if he fails he suffers a miscast on any roll of a double.

Control Familiar - 25pts

The familiar constantly coughs up warpstone dust filling the air with Dark Magic. As it falls towards the ground it resonates against undead flesh like a bats shriek bounces off a moth in the night.

The Necromancer may re-roll any failed Leadership tests when rolling from the Strength of Will special rule. Subject to normal rules regarding rerolls.

Spirit Familiar - 20pts

Some Necromancers spend so long communing with those who have passed over, it becomes almost second nature to summon and heal these creatures. The Necromancer gains +1 to when casting Invocation of Nehek on ethereals and heals 2 wounds instead of one.

THE NECRARCH WORKSHOP

Special Character Design Rules Advanced by Arion

Welcome to the second section of Special Character Design Rules. Here we examine magic item creation, mounts, followers and body guards as well as level two and three abilities. The following two steps are reiterated for ease of use.

Revisions to Basic Rules:

1. Extra power dice do not accumulate and can only be used by the character in question, this is the same with the dispel dice.

Part Two Step One: Work out any additions to your characters stats, Stats with an asterisk can only be upgraded once. Those with a double asterisk may only be upgraded twice. Those with a triple asterisk can only be upgraded three times. The max amount of upgrades from here a hero may take is 85pts worth; the max amount for lords is 140pts worth. To take away statistics simply subtract the points costs below, but there is no limit to how much you can take away. However, a hero choice may not go below 35 points, and a lord, 75pts. You may continue taking away stats after that, but it will have no effect on the points cost.

*M +15pts for upgrade (10pts for heroes) (30 points for dwarves)

Ws +10pts per upgrade

Bs+ 5pts per upgrade

**Str: + 16pts for upgrade

*T : + 35pts for upgrade (25pts for heroes) (45 points for elves).

W: +45pts for upgrade (35pts for heroes)

***I: +5pts per upgrade

**A: +17 pts per upgrade (12pts for heroes)

*LD: + 10pts per upgrade, may not go above 10LD (15pts for heroes) (25 points for all Skaven)

Part Two Step Two: Special rules must be chosen from the table below, If you get a level 1 advantage you must get a level 1 disadvantage or pay the points cost noted, If you get a level 1 disadvantage then you either get a free level 1 advantage or the minus points. It is the same process for level 2 and level 3 special rules. Try

to fit with the fluff, that is the point after all. Level one rules detail basic modifications, more suited to heroes, level two rules are more in-depth, level three rules allow extreme levels of immersion, from madness, to vampirism to almost monstrous abilities or legendary strategical ability, more suited to lords. If your character already has one of the special rules, you may subtract for advantages or add for disadvantages to get rid of the rule. You add/ subtract the given points value. So you could - 10 points (-power dice) to show a bad mage, or a stupid one, or one that focused on dispelling.

Level 2 Advantages

Magic resistance (2) (Does not accumulate) (+30pts)

Hard to Kill: The model is immune to killing blow and poison. (+15pts)

Unbreakable (+20pts)

Frenzy (+15pts)

Superb General: Generals radius is increased to 18" (+20pts)

Level one magician (does not accumulate) (+40pts)

Undying love: Choose one of your other characters, if this character dies then the character gets frenzy and hatred for the rest of the game. (+20pts)

Stubborn: confers to unit (+25pts)

Dodge Level 1: 5+ Ward Save (+30pts)

Killing blow: (25pts)

Spell Knowledge: The model knows one extra spell from the lore. (+15pts)

Elemental Storm/ Disease cloud etc: All enemy units in base to base contact at the start of a combat phase suffer 1 str4 hit with no armour saves (wards and regeneration are allowed) and -1 to hit. (+25pts)

Hidden: The model gains the Scout Rules. You may also hide the character in a friendly infantry unit (except for flying infantry). While hidden the model may not be attacked in any way and does not confer any bonuses to the army or unit. The only way to kill a hidden character is to completely destroy the unit, in which case the model is removed from the table. The character may be revealed at any point during yours or the opponents turn. He/she displaces one model from the front rank and may immediately take action, for example if revealed in the combat phase the model may attack. For the turn the model is revealed the model counts as charging. The model may be mounted, but may not hide in units if this is the case. (+25pts)

5+ Scaly Skin Save: (Does not accumulate.) (+10pts)

Remiss: Every wound the character causes counts as two upon the model. This has no effect on single wound models apart from overkill in challenges. (+20pts)

Riposte: For every attack that fails to wound the character, roll a dice, on a 5 or 6, the opponent suffers one wound at the characters strength, all saves allowed. (+20pts)

Always strikes First: Follows the rules in the Main Rule Book. (+20pts)

Level 2 Disadvantages

Pride: The model must always be the general, even if another model has higher leadership, if two models have this rule you must choose between them, you cannot have both. Their pride also blinds him/her to danger this results in the character being unbreakable, and if the unit flees, the character must pass a leadership test at -2 or stay in combat.. (-20pts)

Drained: -1 power or dispel dice to the pool or character (-15pts)

Fear of (insert army): may be taken for multiple armies, confers the fear onto his mount and/or unit. Fear of causes the enemy to cause fear against him, and his mount and/or unit. (-10pts)

Hated: One enemy army hates this model and the models unit, they gain all bonuses associated. This may be taken for multiple armies but the point cost is only subtracted once. (-5pts, cannot balance out an Advantage)

Mad: Roll a dice at the start of the turn.
1-2: The character immediately charges and fights the closest unit even if it is friendly, if the character is in a unit he/she fights the unit for one turn, holding it up. The character can do nothing but fight the unit.
3-4: The character stays put, dribbling, he/she will fight in CC if needed, but otherwise stays put and does nothing, if there is a unit with the character then the unit either abandons the character or stays put.
5-6: All is well (for the mean time). (-25pts)

Poor General: General radius is reduced by 6" (-20pts)

Level Two Anti-magic Resistance: Enemy gets +2 power dice for the spell if it is cast on his unit or him. (-30pts)

Poor Pupil: -1 magic level: (-40pts)

Uncoordinated: Always strikes last. (-15pts)

Mad General: At the start of the movement phase one randomly determined unit in the army moves its full march distance in a direction indicated by a scatter dice, if it makes contact with an enemy unit it charges, if it makes contact with a friendly unit they both stall and can do nothing until the next turn except fight in combat but without rank bonuses. This counts as the units movement, units in combat are out of the determining. (-30pts)



Model by Riddler

Level 3 Advantages

Brilliant General: You may redeploy one unit after both sides deployment. (+35pts)

Flying Unit: The model may 'fly'. (+35pts)

Dual Wield: The Character may use two magic weapons or a magic and mundane weapon at the same time, gaining +1 attack. Allocate the effects of each to the attacks. For example if the model has four attacks, you could use two attacks with one sword, and the other two with the other sword. (+20pts)

Close Quarters Combat: The model may choose one of three techniques to use during the each combat phase. The model may not use the same one in two combat phases.

Technique One: Disarm: If the character successfully wounds an opponent, the character may instead Disarm them. If this option is chosen then the opponent loses the weapon for the rest of the game.

Technique Two: Chokehold: If the model successfully kills a man sized opponent, he may use the model as a body shield. The character has his attacks characteristic decreased by one, however any successful wounds directed against the character are automatically directed against the body shield, using the body shield original wounds and toughness and protection (armour save/ward save/regeneration) Once the body shield is dead, all additional wounds which were directed against the body shield are lost.

Technique Three: Flowing defence: For every successful attack on the model, roll to hit with the character, if you hit the attack is discounted and your attack gets through. If two characters are using this technique against each other there is the possibility of the attacks being blocked and exploited again and again.

Killing Blow on 5+ (35pts)

Vampire: The character gains the undead rule, +1 str, toughness and attacks and is a level one wizard. (+ 65pts, this has to be paid for, you cannot get a disadvantage to balance it).

Unusual Army Composition: The character may take one type of core unit from another army, this does not count towards core minimum. (+ 30pts)

Regeneration (+ 40pts)

Causes Terror (+50pts)

Level 2 magician (Does not accumulate) (+60pts)

Level 3 magic Resistance (Does not accumulate) (+50pts)

Power Source: +2 Power Dice (+50pts)

Dodge Level Two: 4 + Ward Save

Thick Scaly Skin: 4+ save: (20pts)

Paladin of the Light / Lord of Death etc:

Bound Spell Power Level 4

Allows D6 infantry models or wounds to be revived from a unit/ character within 6" of the Special character. Cavalry units, monsters and characters may only have D3 models/ wounds revived (50pts)

Unearthly Beauty/Handsomeness: One enemy model in base to base contact must take a LD test at -2, if they fail they may not attack the character.. (30pts)



Model by Vash1313

Level 3 Disadvantages

Weak : Each wound does 2 wounds.
(-20pts)

Deathwish: Model must always charge, and is unbreakable but may not wear any mundane or magical armour, confers to unit if the model has the highest leadership in the unit. (-25pts)

Old Battle Wound: Roll at the start of each turn, on a

1: The model loses a wound but can continue as normally

2: The model collapses in pain and does nothing until the start of the next turn

3-4: The model suffers -3 Initiative until the start of the next turn

5: The model -1 A until the start of the next turn

6: 'I Can fight on' (all is well for the mean time) .
(-20pts)

Lost Grip on the Army: 1D6 units per turn are affected (chosen by you not your opponent) roll a d3 for each of these units, that is how many

desert / crumble. These models are taken away as if killed. Special choices lose one model on a 4+, and rare choices do not ever lose a model, nor do unbreakable units (not undead though!) (-50pts)

Limited army: You may only choose up to 6 different types of unit from your army, includes character types. (-35pts)

Level 3 Anti Magic-resistance: Enemy gets +3 power dice for the spell if it is cast on his unit or him. (-40pts)

The Great Forge:

Mundane Equipment:

For reference below, and if you don't want a magic weapon for your character:
You may buy any of the following for the listed costs:

Close Combat:

Additional Hand weapon	+6pts.
Great Weapon	+6pts
Spear	+4pts
Flail	+4pts
Morning Star	+3pts
Halberd	+6pts
Lance	+6pts
Scourge (HW, -1 to AS)	+4pts
Rapier (HW, +1 to I)	+3pts
Sword Breaker (HW, -1 to enemy Str)...	
	+5pts

Ranged Weapons:

Shortbow	+3pts
Bow	+4pts
Longbow	+6pts
Crossbow	+6pts
Repeater Crossbow	+10pts
Repeater Handbow (RXB, 8")....	
	+8pts
Pair of Repeater Handbows	+16pts
Sling	+8pts
Javelin	+5pts
Throwing knives	+4pts
Throwing Axe	+3pts
Handgun	+10pts
Hochland Long Rifle (30", pick out characters)...	+15pts
Repeater Handgun (3xshots)	
	+15pts

Pistol	+5pts
Pair of Pistols	+10pts
Warplock Pistols (Str5)	+10pts
Pair of Warplock Pistols	+20pts
Elven longbow (Str4 at 15")	+10pts.

Armour:

Light Armour	+3pts
Heavy Armour	+6pts
Fullplate Armour	+10pts
Shield	+3pts
Seadragon Cloak (+1AS, +2 Shooting AS)	+6pts.
Helm (+1 to AS)	+5pts

Magical Equipment:

You have four options here, create an item from scratch, use an existing item, modify an item or merge existing items). You may do all on one item, for example creating an item from scratch, modifying it and merge it with an existing item. Again, exercise reason.



Model by Mousekiller

Merge Existing Items.

You may merge up to 3 items into one. Pick your three items, these may be from any army book. To merge an item with another item from your armoury or common list you must pay +5 points. To merge an item with an item from another list, you must pay +10pts. If you wish to merge a third item onto an item of two, and any of the three is an item from another AB then you must pay +15pts. These are all in addition to the points costs of the items. You

may merge in an item you create (later on), this costs an additional 15pts.

Use existing item:

You may pick an item from any army book as per normal. Getting items from other armies costs +10pts.

Modify items:

Use the stat table above to modify items, e.g buy a stat bonus or minus on the wielder for the weapon.

Create an Item:

Start off with Blank Item. Blank Item may be from any of the items, e.g weapon, arcane, armour etc. Blank Item costs 5 pts. Creating each blank item is different e.g there is a different process for each type.

Magic Weapons:

You now have blank weapon, choose a mundane weapon to base it on.

Once you have your mundane weapon, the first step is to decide whether the weapon will give any statistic increases or decreases to the user using the stat table above (ranged weapons will of course use the stat modifications as their strength, and not add to the user). The weapon cannot go into minus points and CC weapons may not -BS, Ranged weapons may not -WS. The weapon is a magical weapon.

The second step is to decide whether it will give any special effects, from here or from the special rules tables.

Effect 1: Poison/ Stat decrease upon enemy: The weapon causes -1 a particular stat (chosen) if the enemy model fails the test for that stat. This cannot be used on wounds. If the weapon affects WS,BS or I, the statistic goes down by 2. May be taken multiple times for different stats.
(+20pts)

Effect 2: Does D3 Wounds per hit.
(+40pts)

Effect 3: Killing blow.
(+25pts)

Effect 4: Soul Stealer.

Instead of rolling to wound, both you and the enemy roll a dice and add your leadership, add one to your score for every hit scored. The lowest score loses, and is immediately removed from the table.

(+70pts)

Effect 6: Ignores Armour Saves.

(+50pts)

Effect 6: Gives D3 Extra attacks.

Roll at the start of the combat

(+35pts)

Effect 7: Blinding Light.

For every successful wound the model causes all enemy models in base to base suffer -1 to hit, cumulative.

(+20pts)

Effect 8: -1 to Enemy Armour Save.

(+5pts)

Effect 9: Bolt Thrower.

The weapon is now a ranged weapon, that operates as a Bolt thrower as per the main Rulebook.

(+30pts)

Effect 10: Impale

If the character has a spear, he gets +3 Str on the charge.

(+20pts)

Magic Armour: Start with Blank armour, choose whether is armour, shield or helm.

Step 1: Use the stat table above if you want stat bonuses or decreases.

Step 2: +Armour save. For every 5 pts you get an extra armour save point.

Step 3: Choose special effects for your armour:

Effect 1: (Helms only) Hawkeye.

+12" to range of ranged weapons, +2 to BS.
(+15pts)

Effect 2: Regeneration.

(+40pts)

Effect 3: Resistant

The armour increases the wearer's toughness to one more than the strength of the attacks of one specifically chosen model, to a maximum of T6. However if the model is attacked by any other opponents his toughness is reduced by 1.
(+30pts)

Enchanted Items: (Bound items, yay!)

To create the item, choose a medium, you may choose a piece of armour, a weapon or a trinket. The weapons and/or armour count as one and take up an arm etc, they may be of any type.

To create the magic item pick a spell from any lore, spells from other Army Book lores incur an extra 10pts cost, this does not happen for the 8 main lores. You then attach this spell to the item.

Follow this table:

NB: Invocation of Nehek is a level 6 spell, so is Dispel Magic, and other automatically known spells.

Level 1 Spell: Power level 3 (+15pts)

Level 2 Spell: Power level 3 (+20pts)

Level 3 Spell: Power level 3 (+30pts)

Level 4 Spell: Power level 4 (+35pts)

Level 5 Spell: Power level 4 (+40pts)

Level 6 Spell: Power level 5 (+55pts)

Arcane Items and Talismans:

Modify existing. They cover all bases.



Model by Vash1313

Mounts:

You may mount your character on any kind of mount from any army, paying the appropriate points cost. Mounts may also be given statistic changes and Special rules from the Appropriate Tables as well as Mount Specific Rules below:

Mount Specific Rules:

Rule One: Undying Loyalty.

The monster does not test on the monster reaction table, instead acting as a lone monster would. Since the monster takes the rider's body with it, the enemy gets no victory points unless both are killed. If the mount is not a monster, and the rider is on one wound as a result of combat, and there is no friendly unit in the combat then take a LD test using the rider's LD. If failed the rider and character immediately flee 3D6" then rally. The enemy may pursue. If passed then the player may choose to stay or flee. (+25pts)

Rule Two: Independent Mount.

If the mount is not a monster, then it remains in play even if the rider dies.
(+15pts)

Rule Three: Spikes / Horns / Steel Shod Hooves.

The mount gains +1 Str on the charge for the mount)
(+10pts)

Rule Four: Monster Barding.

The Monster gains +1 to its AS, so does the rider.

(+10pts)

Rule Five: Breath Attack.

The Mount gains one of the following breath attacks.

Fire: Flame Template, Str 4, Flaming. (+15pts)

Ice: Flame Template, Str 4, -1 to enemy movement and initiative until your next shooting phase. (+15pts)

Stone: Use rules for cannonballs. But at Str 6, maximum range 36". A misfire results in on a 1-3, no shooting for this turn, 4-6, no shooting for this or the next turn. (+50pts)

Electric: Shooting Attack, Str 6, 24", no armour saves. If it kills one model in the unit it is aimed at, then all models in base to base contact with the dead model suffers a Str 5 attack, if they die, then all models in base to base with them suffer a Str 4 attack, so on and so forth. A model cannot be electrocuted twice. (+40pts)

Poisons:

The following poison may be applied to the character's weapons, and confer their effects to the weapon. The attacks do not count as poisoned in the normal rule sense (i.e. on a 6 to hit it auto-wounds). You may not combine multiple poisons on the same weapon.

Essence of Nightshade:

Each successful wound causes 2 wounds. (+20pts)

Manbane:

Character's attacks are counted as being one higher in strength than the opponents Toughness, up to Str 6. (+25pts)

Terrorcap:

If the character causes a successful wound against a model, the character is subject to the rules of terror for that model. In addition a monster will automatically go Raaaaargh! if affected by this poison without a rider. (+15pts)

Hexweed:

If a model is successfully wounded by a weapon with this poison, the model suffers an additional wound for every successive combat phase.

Twilight Frog Venom:

Automatically wounds on a 5 to hit, not a 6.

Body Guards and Followers.

You may choose to have either a band of followers, or a single body guard.

Followers:

Unit size 1-5. Each Follower is chosen from any unit choice from any army. You must pay the appropriate points cost for each model. So, a band could be made up of a Wardancer, a Wraith, a Grave Guard, a Black Guard and an Ogre lead Belcher.

One may be upgraded to Champion at +16pts, this confers an extra attack.

One may be upgraded to a Standard Bearer at +16pts.

One may be upgraded to a Musician at +8pts. If the character is mounted, then the followers must be mounted on the basic steed of your army, if your army does not include a steed, use the Following rules: (+10 points per model)

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld
8	3	0	4	-	-	3	2	-

If your character is flying, then all followers must be mounted on the basic flying mount (Pegasi, Warhawks, Hellsteeds) of your army, if there is none use the following rules.

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld
8	4	0	4	-	-	3	2	-

Special Rule:**Fly.**

The 'band' (character and followers) follows all the rules for a unit and move as skirmishers, however they may (if not flying) join any other unit, replacing the front rank.

Alternatively, the character may have familiars as followers if they are a magician. These models automatically move at the same pace as your character, and can be placed as you see fit

throughout the unit. You may buy the following familiars.

Spell Familiar:

Gives the character an extra spell. May be placed at any point within 8" of the character, at the start of each turn and the character may use its line of sight when casting spells as well as that of the familiars own. (+25pts)

Suicide Familiar: If an enemy unit is within 8" at the start of the turn then the suicide familiar may run at them. If he does so, the model is immediately removed, but the opposing unit suffers 2D6 Str 4 hits. (+30pts)

Body Shield Familiar: The first successful wound against the character is discounted and the BSF removed. (+25pts)

Body Guards:

Choose one champion of any unit from any army. Add 30pts to the cost of this champion but add an extra wound. The model may use any of the special rules from the appropriate table. The character and Bodyguard form a Skirmishing unit that may join any unit, replacing two models of the front rank. The Bodyguard also follows the rules of having to buy one of the above mount to match the character. The bodyguard also has the following Special Rules:

Principal above Life:

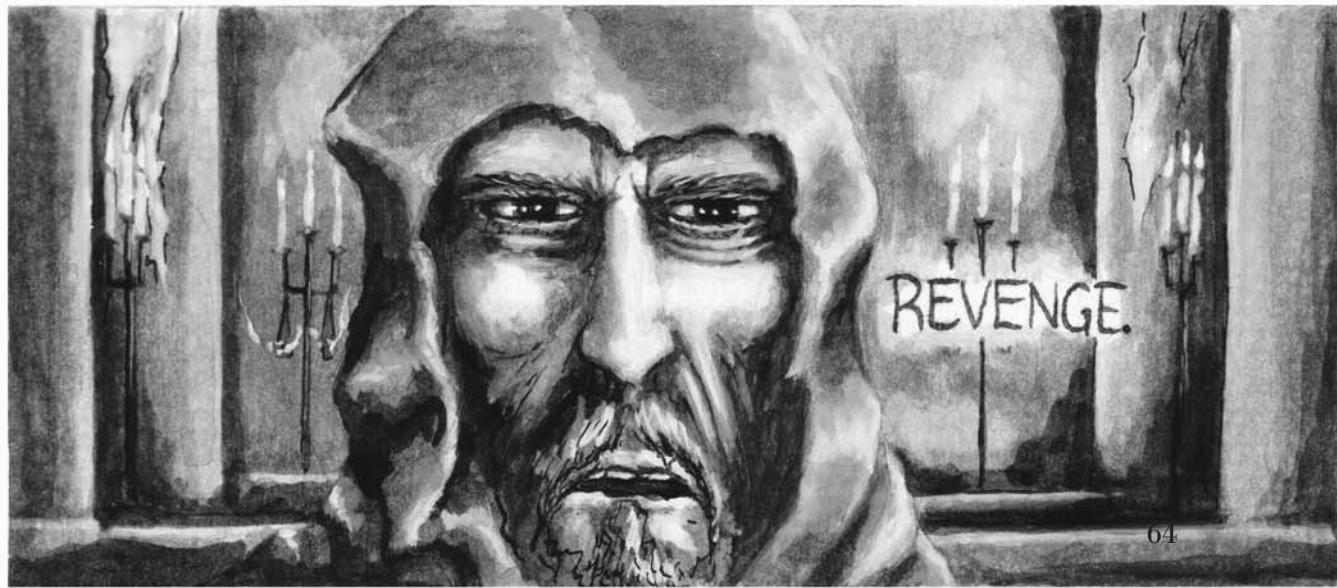
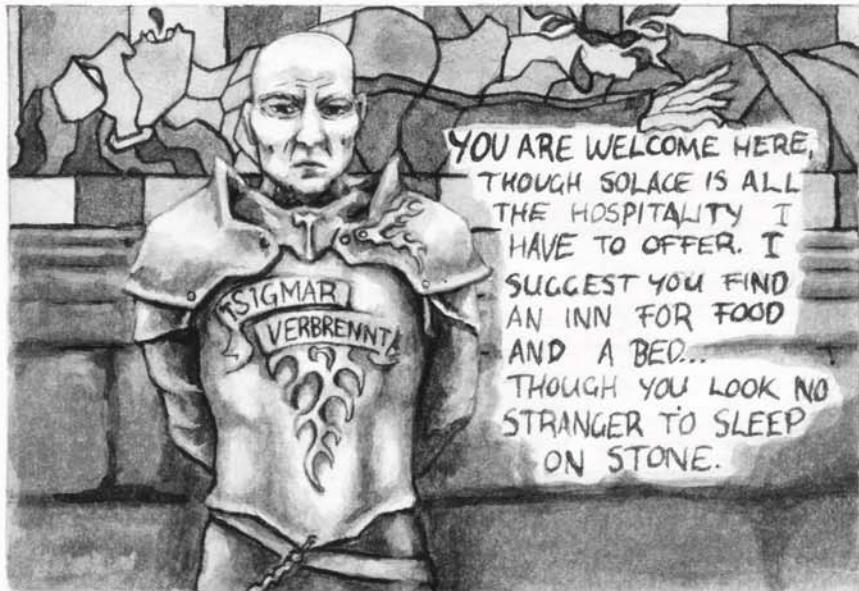
For every wound the character takes, before saves, roll a d6, on a 2+ the wound is transferred to the bodyguard. He may take his armour saves/ward saves.

Parry:

The bodyguard may sacrifice his attacks. For every attack sacrificed, on enemy model in base to base loses an attack.

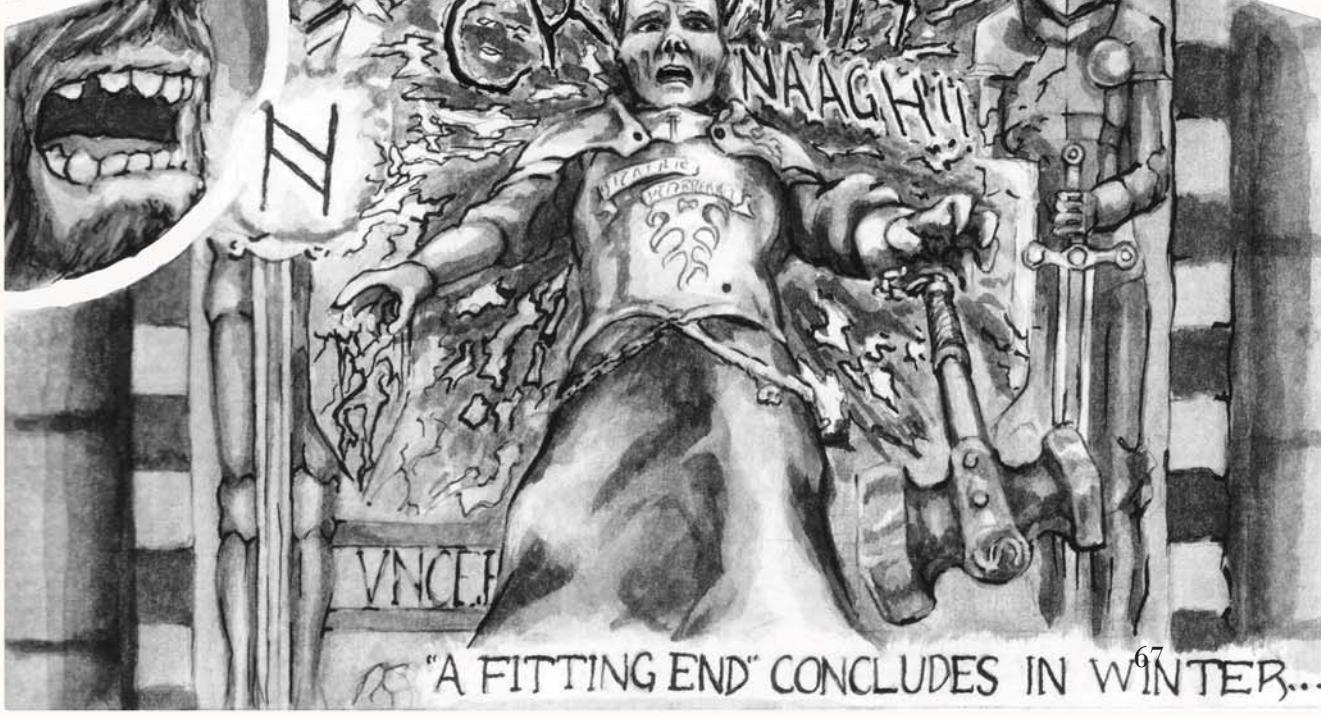
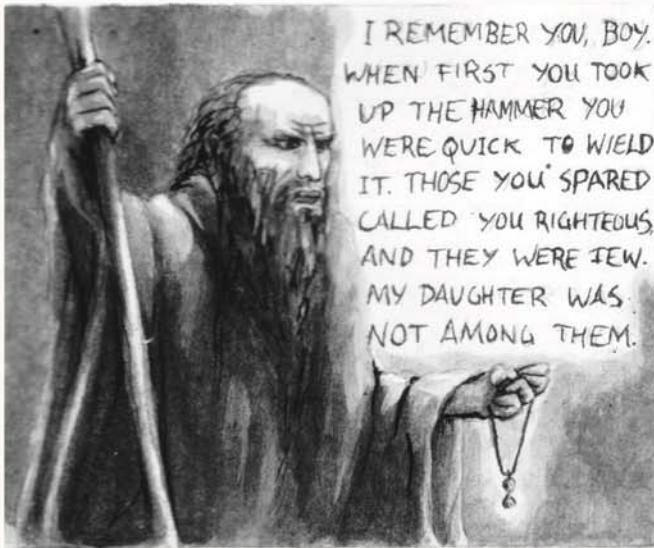
And there you have it, how to make and point your own special character, for use in home games.











THE TEACHINGS OF ABHORASH – ADVANCED

Combat Orientated Army Lists by MasterSpark

It is more or less a common fact today that the current edition of the Vampire Counts in Warhammer Fantasy Battles has become one of the very most powerful armies in the entire game. The Army Book features a range of fearsome unit types, special rules and also an extraordinarily useful exclusive lore of magic. The Undead troops are already competent in and of themselves but when you factor in the effects of the magic, they become something entirely else. With the ability to revive the fallen en masse and even increase the size of units beyond their starting size practically free of charge, the Vampire Counts can basically forego the spending of points on their compulsory core units and still end up with reliable fighting blocks after a turn or two. With the possibility to move units up to twice per turn, they are able to execute otherwise impossible manoeuvres and also get themselves out of ill-favoured situations. Not only do the Vampire Counts have this kind of influential spells at their disposal, they also have easy access to a large amount of casting dice to use with these powerful spells along with a smattering of affordable bound spells to bolster an already vicious magic phase. Last but certainly not least is the “Necromancy” attribute that the basic (which arguably happens to be the very best ones) spells of the lore has, which enables all Wizards to cast them repeatedly in the same magic phase. With all of these potential advantages that a heavy investment in magic brings, it isn't hard to understand why this approach to the Vampire Counts army is a popular one!

From the opposition's point of view, an army of the Vampire Counts brimming with power dice and bound spells can appear as an insurmountable opponent unless they've brought the necessary means to defend themselves against the magical onslaught. Unfortunately, not all of the armies in Warhammer can and the ones that actually do are often forced into using a certain kind of army build to even stand a chance of defeating the Undead. Finding yourself in a situation like this can easily make the game appear increasingly more stale and uninteresting.

What can You do to Prevent this from Happening?

Luckily, there is an easy way to stop a vicious circle like this from appearing. As was mentioned earlier, the Undead troops are perfectly able to handle any opponent that faces them if they're used in a sound and thoughtful way, even without the aid of magic. By consciously lowering the output of magic that your army possesses, and with it the army's inherent reliance on said magic, you'll find yourself on a more level playing field with the other races while still commanding an army that can perform with excellence when it is played well. By making your army more orientated towards combat in this way you'll find that the amount of viable strategies and army build will increase for both yourself and your opponent. This will undoubtedly lead to a richer and deeper gaming experience for everyone involved.

The aim of this article is to help you get comfortable with the idea of playing a combat-orientated Vampire Counts army with guidelines both for building your army lists as well as playing this type of army.



Model by Markof

Getting Started

For starters, let's clarify what exactly defines a combat Vampire Counts army. It's obviously not an army that relies on magic to do the heavy lifting for you and it is also not necessarily an army that eschews magic completely in favour of fast-moving shock troops and thunderous cavalry charges (which can just as readily unbalance the game as an overly extensive magic phase, albeit in a different way). No, a combat army can be one where there's a balance between the army itself and the magic that's available to it. The magic will be but one of the tools that you'll use to achieve victory instead of it being the one sole tool. Your magic will still have a role to play in your battles but your entire army will not hinge upon the success of your casting dice.

To put things in perspective, an army of between 2000-2250 points (the usual suspects) will often contain a Vampire Lord along with an additional hero Vampire or two. This will put you at a rough base value of 5-6 power dice and 4-5 dispel dice. By adding a few select upgrades and choices you can comfortably reach the area of 7-8 power dice and a bound spell or two which is a balanced amount where you'll be able to outdo your opponent's dispelling prowess (in the vast majority of cases, at least) but it'll still not be a game-breaking factor. After this is taken care of you'll be free to gear your characters up to be powerful warriors in addition to adept casters. The presence of these fighters will enable even your individually mediocre units to grapple with most enemies and come out on top.

With the preliminary introduction taken care of, let's delve into the unit entries that the Army Book holds!



Model by DV8

Characters

The character choices that you'll make in a Vampire Counts army will be an important part of your lists. They're literally the very driving force of your army and their influence will boost your army in several ways.

Let's start with the chief **Vampire Lord** of the army. A Vampire Lord can be geared up to be a very powerful warrior, capable of leading his minions through most infernos and come out of it in one piece. In the way of weapons, a lance (the rightfully expensive **Dreadlance**, the more economic **Balefire Spike** or a mundane one obtained through purchasing the Dread Knight bloodline power) can boost the fighting prowess of your Lord if you can manage to sound off a charge. The humble **Sword of Might** does also deserve a mention in this department. Additionally there's the **Blood Drinker** which will allow your Lord to revive his bodyguard unit or himself with every wound he causes to the enemy. This can be a very valuable asset in an army where the healing magic might not be able to cover all fronts!

In the way of defence there is some potential for variation depending on who your opponent is. **Walach's Bloody Hauberk** is a good piece of equipment for any Lord and will yield a respectable 1+ armour save if combined with the Dread Knight power, along with the Hauberk's 5+ ward save. If you do not wish to spend any of your Bloodline points allowance on getting an armour save, **The Flayed Hauberk** will provide you with an instant 2+ armour save which will suffice in many situations. Some armies can bring an unsightly amount of killing blows to the table and to ward those away you'd need the **Cadaverous Cuirass**. The negative sides to choosing these two latter pieces of armour is that you'll be left with a single other choice for a worthwhile ward save and that is the **Crown of the Damned**. While taking stupidity tests on a Leadership value of 10 might not make for much difference over the course of a game, it can really screw with your strategy when it does strike. An alternative way to combat the threat of killing blows is the **Nightshroud**. This handy little object will let you strike before the vast majority of attackers in the game, giving your Lord a chance to dispose of any would-be killers before they get to make their move. While certainly not fail-safe, this could be a

way around the most immediate threats without taking your chances with stupidity. Additional trinkets which can also help protect your Lord are the **Cursed Book** which will temporarily hamper one chosen enemy and the **Gem of Blood** which can negate the first wound suffered.

Lastly comes the Vampiric Bloodline powers, many of which can further boost the power of a Vampire Lord. For defence, both **Avatar of War** and **Dread Knight** will provide you with an armour save at a reasonable cost, especially so the Dread Knight (remember that a model mounted on a steed can still join a unit of infantry!). Offensively speaking, the **Infinite Hatred** power is hugely helpful as it allows you the benefit of Hatred but in every single combat phase. The downside to this is that you'll have to pursue any defeated enemy which might sometimes work against your strategic wishes but this usually pales in the face of the power's advantages. Other than this, the **Red Fury** will increase the Lord's potential for mayhem by quite a margin, but also at a substantial price. **Beguile** is another item that deserves consideration. This power works well with the Blood Drinker especially, since it will allow the Lord to circumvent the disadvantages of being at his base Strength 5 to a degree, if the power's effect is successful. Other than this there are certainly other useful powers to consider, such as **Supernatural Horror**, **Walking Death** and **Aura of Dark Majesty**. All of these will improve upon the influence of your Lord but there's only enough room for a select few!

To put theory into practice, here's three example builds of a fighting Vampire Lord.

Vampire Lord – Red Fury, Beguile, Infinite Hatred, Blood Drinker, The Flayed Hauberk, Crown of the Damned – 405

This fellow would be an ideal leader for a contingent of Grave Guard. He is able to ruthlessly lay into the enemy's rank and file soldiers, cutting them to ribbons which in turn will sustain both himself and his bodyguards. He will be vulnerable to killing blows (although he will still have a 4+ ward save against them) but smart use of a unit champion can go a long way to keep him out of harm's way of

these threats. He will obviously suffer from the effects of stupidity but the risk will rather surely be outweighed by the advantages.

Vampire Lord – Dread Knight, Beguile, Walking Death, Infinite Hatred, Walach's Bloody Hauberk, Gem of Blood, The Cursed Book, The Balefire Spike – 405

This Lord takes a different approach to battle. When charging he will strike with impressive Strength 7 flaming attacks, again with the re-rolling of his misses and possibly his to-wound rolls as well. He sports a 1+ armour save in combination with a 5+ ward save, all without any inherent disadvantages. The Cursed Book allows him to substantially reduce the potency of any one enemy attacker once per game, while the Gem of Blood will likely ward away the first wounding hit suffered. Hopefully that'll be a dangerous one! But not only this, he will also increase his unit's static combat resolution, making him quite useful to have around in all situations.

An alternative approach to a combat Lord is to mount him on a flying Hellsteed or through the Flying Horror power. This will allow the Lord to quickly move about the battlefield and lend his strength where you need it the most. However, do take care not to leave him in a position where your opponent can draw a bead on him!

Vampire Lord – Hellsteed, Red Fury, Walking Death, Avatar of Death, Dreadlance, Wristbands of Black Gold – 420

With an armour save of 3+ and a strong ward against any and all ranged attacks, this Lord can move about the battlefield with impunity. He will absolutely destroy any smaller unit he might target but due to his relative vulnerability in close combat you should strive to stay away from the more offensively powerful opponents.

As an added note, it is certainly an option for all of the above builds to purchase the additional magic level if you deem it useful.

Finally, while it is indeed a valid choice, mounting your Vampire Lord on top of a monstrous mount will not be discussed here. The usage of a Dragon Rider requires enough alterations that it could warrant an article on its own!



Model by CurseofBeers

After the Lord choices we reach the [Heroes](#) and first up on this list is the [Vampire](#) entry. Vampires can be toolled up to perform a wide variety of roles in your army. To fit in well with this kind of army, Vampires work wonderfully as physical enforcers for your units, capable of turning even the core infantry units into admirable combat blocks. Their options for bloodline powers and magical items are basically the same as for the Vampire Lord but on a smaller scale (remember that they'll have to share the magic item list with the Lord though). As Vampires boast an impressive offensive statline per default, focusing on their defence is often the most effective route. An example build of a good hero-level Vampire fighter would be this,

Vampire – Dread Knight, Walking Death, Enchanted Shield – 165

Well protected and with a good Strength value, this chap will boost the static combat resolution for the unit he is attached to. Economic and effective!

If you feel the need to include just a few more magical casting dice in your army, gearing a Vampire up to work as both a fighter and a wizard is both easy and effective. For example,

Vampire – Dark Acolyte, Lord of the Dead, The Flayed Hauberk, Sword of Might/Battle – 185

A lvl 2 wizard with a 2+ armour save and offensively strong enough to duff up most other hero level characters, this Vampire would make a good leader for a unit of Skeleton Warriors. The Swords of Might and Battle are both more efficient against certain foes (Might against armour, Battle against numbers), you can tailor this to whichever opponent you'll be fighting at the moment.

Additionally, Vampires can be made horrifyingly mobile with the use of either **Flying Horror** or the **Talisman of the Lycni**. A Vampire with either of these items can hide inside a friendly unit until the time is right, after which they will fly out of their nest with great speed, nestling themselves among the enemy lines to march block or to attack smaller units. Here are two example builds of this kind of mobile Vampire, one with Flying Horror and the other with the Talisman.

Vampire – Flying Horror, Avatar of Death (Great Weapon), Dispel Scroll, Enchanted Shield – 190

This character moves with unprecedented speed due to flying and will sport some very useful Strength 7 attacks. This means that he'll be able to smash apart Chariots of all kinds with ease! The Enchanted Shield will boost his armour save against missiles (and also in close combat if he chooses to use his hand weapon) while his Scroll can be used to stop a particularly dangerous spell from getting cast.

Vampire – Walking Death, Supernatural Horror, The Flayed Hauberk, Sword of Battle, Talisman of the Lycni – 200

This set up is the most expensive one shown so far but he is truly a recipe for carnage. With his high rate of movement he can get himself into positions where his Terror can cause great disturbance. He sports a 2+ armour save and four Strength 5 attacks, along with a static combat resolution of 1, even on his own. In fact, he is just as good a leader for a unit of infantry as he is a fast-moving assassin!

While hero-level Vampires can indeed be given the honour of carrying the army Battle Standard, it is generally better placed in the hands of a sturdy Wight King. The use of these will be covered below.

Finally, for games below 2000 points a fighting Vampire can still fit your needs for a general, although they are remarkably less resilient than a Lord. Loading up on the protection is preferable here, with **Walach's Bloody Hauberk** being a fine choice. For instance,

Vampire – Dread Knight, Walking Death, Walach's Bloody Hauberk – 195

With a 1+ armour save and a 5+ ward save he won't be easy for most enemies to crack. You'll still want to watch out how what you get him entangled with though, his two wounds at T4 will leave him vulnerable.



Model by Vash1313

Wight Kings are solid fighters, substantially harder to bring down in comparison to even Vampires. Therefore they are the perfect candidate for being the one to bear the army Battle Standard. You'll definitely want to have this piece of equipment in your army as it will increase your combat resolution as well as reducing the amount of wounds lost through crumbling if you should find yourself on the losing side after a round of combat.

With an unlimited points allowance in regards to magical banners, a Wight King Battle Standard Bearer is free to choose any banner in the list, with the most expensive being exclusive to said Battle Standard. The two most expensive banners will both work towards keeping your soldiers on the table. The **Drakenhof Banner** is the more powerful of these two and will give the bearer and his unit a great boost in survivability through regeneration (remember that you may make a regeneration save against wounds suffered from crumbling!) but with an unsightly price tag. What's more, the regeneration which it bestows can be ignored by both flaming attacks and killing blow. Some armies sport more of these than others, which make this banner an option that is better against some than others. For example, Daemons of Chaos can produce a large amount of both flaming attacks and killing blow while Dark Elves can bless any single unit with killing blows through their Cauldron of Blood. Also remember that if the Wight King himself is felled the regeneration will be lost instantly. This can potentially leave the remaining unit in a very rough spot where the regeneration that carried them through is now suddenly lost. The **Flag of Blood** **Keep** is another useful banner almost half the cost of The Drakenhof Banner and will protect against any and all ranged attacks. The downside to this one is, obviously, that it will not bring you any advantages while in close combat. Aside from these two expensive gadgets, a Wight King can choose a standard which will increase his unit's efficiency in other ways, such as the **Warbanner** and **Banner of the Endless Nightmare**. If placed with certain units, a battle standard can produce some very effective combinations such as the **Banner of the Barrows** and the **Royal Standard of Strigos** together in a unit of Grave Guard or Black Knights, greatly enhancing the unit's offensive punch.

Aside from toting a magical banner, Wight Kings can also be turned into fearsome fighters and very able bodyguards for other important characters, such as your Lord. The **Sword of Kings** is a phenomenally potent weapon against man-sized characters as it allows your Wight King to land a killing blow on a roll of 5+ instead of just a 6. Combined with the **Nightshroud**, this powerful duellist can spell the death of many characters before they get a chance to react! A Wight King is also a very useful leader for a unit of Black Knights, since he will not impair their inherent ethereal mobility.

Last on the list of available hero choices is the **Necromancer**. While these fellows are a bit against the spirit of this kind of army, they can still be useful as carriers of Dispel Scrolls and other things for magical defence.



Models by SeldoM

Infantry Units

Now that we've gone over the available character choices it is time to focus more on how to build the very army itself. Properly tooled and used Undead infantry can be a very solid and reliable force able to duke it out with most things sent against them. The trick with them in a more balanced army is to start them out nice and large, thereby putting less pressure on your pool of casting dice to raise and keep them up to combat strength. A unit size of 20 models is often the best starting point while also not too expensive to accommodate.

As your compulsory core units, both **Skeleton Warriors** and **Crypt Ghouls** are vying for your

favour but they do sport some major differences to one another. Skeletons generally fare better against an enemy that throws a large amount of moderately strong attacks at you, such as Elves. The Skeletons will be fairly well protected by their armour save and their static combat resolution gained from ranks, outnumbering and a (potentially magical!) standard. While Skeletons are this kind of passively offensive, Ghouls take a more actively offensive approach with a higher weapon skill and a large amount of poisoned attacks. Ghouls excel against all sorts of enemies that rely on their toughness to keep them safe and will also have a decent protection from ranged attacks with their Toughness 4. Additionally, Crypt Ghouls can also be a basis for a very fast-moving army if you've got the **Ghoulkin** bloodline power in your army, allowing these units to keep pace with your cavalry. The kind of enemy that both of these core units perform poorly against is the highly armoured variety, such as various kinds of Knights and Chaos Warriors. These enemies often pack enough strength to punch your Skeletons into dust while the poisoned attacks of your Ghouls will leave mere scratch-marks in their armour. The assistance of your Vampires and Wight Kings will be needed here if you wish for success!

Zombie Hordes are the third available choice for your required core units and, while they certainly do have their uses as a block unit, they require a finesse of use rather unlike what their brain dead nature would suggest. They've universally poor statistics and most enemies will hew through them without much effort. What they can achieve for you however is to hold an enemy unit up for a few turns or to hold/contest table quarters. Be wary of using a unit of Zombies as part of your battle line as the enemy might well be able to summon enough force to punch through them in one go, leaving a gaping hole in your formation. Using them in the aforementioned tar-pitting way also requires some expenditure of magic to keep them in the fight, something which might not always be a possibility for you when faced with greater priorities.

Where Skeletons and Ghouls fail to combat their enemy with efficiency, the elite **Grave Guard** have the necessary tools to do battle against all foes. They are a very solid unit with great defences and their offensive abilities are made fearsome thanks to Killing Blow. Like the other infantry units, each successful casting of Invocation of Nehek will bring a full D6 worth of models back to life and this in conjunction with their original hardiness makes the Grave Guard a good choice when you put together an army. By removing their shields and giving them great weapons they will become tremendously hard-hitting but also a lot more vulnerable. Great weapon-wielding Grave Guard can work very well as a smaller support unit though, slamming into the flanks of an engaged enemy with great destructive force where they'll be safe from the attentions of any enemy characters in said enemy unit.

Cavalry Units

The Undead infantry is rather limited in the way of manoeuvrability thanks to being Movement 4 but luckily, the Vampire Counts have at their disposal a large amount of creatures that can remedy this, and then some!

The humble **Dire Wolves** can fulfil many roles in your army, and at a very reasonable price. With a high Movement 9 and also being Fast Cavalry, they're able to scoot about the battlefield with great speed. Hunting war machines and other small support units or positioning them for flanking charges once combat has been joined, a minimally sized unit of 5 Wolves will rarely prove to be a poor choice when building your army. Additionally, a unit of 7 Wolves, with one of them being a **Doom Wolf**, is also able to stall any character-ridden monster for an entire turn sequence. This was mentioned and expanded on in the first issue of The Invocation.

Like their footslogging cousins the Grave Guard, **Black Knights** are also a resilient unit with respectable hitting power. What's more, their Skeletal Steeds enable them to pass through terrain without penalties when on the move, giving them access to virtually the entire battlefield. Smaller units of these riders (say 5-6) can be used to great effect as support units to help out your engaged units. They can also be used against the enemy's own cavalry head-on, where their Killing Blow

makes them rightly feared. If used in either of these more minor roles I would usually choose to leave their barding at home. Especially when you're duelling against opposing cavalry, having those two additional inches of range can be a very deciding factor. Alternatively, a slightly larger unit (about 7-8) of Black Knights will also make a good unit for a mounted Wight King to lead. As the Wight King himself can also choose a Skeletal Steed as his mount, he will not remove their special movement attributes, whereas a mounted Vampire unfortunately would. A unit of 8 Black Knights with a Wight King in tow with either the Banner of the Barrows or The Royal Standard of Strigos (both useful for improving their offence) can easily be a powerful yet quite manoeuvrable fighting force.

As the final unit of available Undead cavalry, the fearsome **Blood Knights** hold the final word in sheer hitting-power. A successful charge with these will see you throw a handful of highly powerful attacks at your enemy, easily enough to obliterate most things on average. The brutal efficiency of their onslaught is countered by their high points cost and the strategic downsides to being frenzied. They will need the attention of smaller support units such as Dire Wolves and/or Fell Bats to ensure that the enemy cannot have their way with your expensive super-heavy cavalry and their eagerness to get to grips with the foe.



Models by Vash1313

Auxiliary Support Units

The Vampire Counts have access to a large number of units that will enhance the overall capabilities of your army in one way or another.

The **Corpse Cart** is an investment to consider. It holds a very helpful bound spell and can also (and should be, for the relatively low cost of the upgrades) be modified to either aid you in your summoning endeavours or to make casting magic harder for your opponent. You can also choose to mount a Necromancer on top of one and thus have it join one of your infantry units. In this way you can greatly increase your units rank bonus as the Cart takes up enough space to cover about 10 infantry models! However, this turns the Necromancer into somewhat of a sitting duck in combat and you should be prepared to lose him rather quickly.

In the way of flying units you've both the **Bat Swarms** and **Fell Bats** at your disposal. The former is made more or less redundant by the latter however, with their only positive side being that Bat Swarms do not take up a special choice in your army. Fell Bats can be used for a variety of things, be it hunting war machines or other isolated individuals, to screen another unit from the enemy's sight or to catch fleeing enemies that have managed to escape your wrath in close combat.

Something that is largely unique to the Vampire Counts is the presence of ethereal units. Immune to mundane attacks from both a distance and in close combat, both **Spirit Hosts** and **Cairn Wraiths** are a valuable addition to your army. While both entries cost a substantial amount of points there's always an important role for these to fill. Placed in front of your other units they can be used as a nearly impenetrable shield against ranged attacks, keeping the covered units almost completely safe while you approach the enemy. They're also excellent at intercepting enemy monsters (provided that there's not a character toting a magical weapon riding them) and enemy cavalry. Aside from causing Terror instead of Fear, Wraiths have a purely offensive advantage over Spirit Hosts and can also upgrade one of their numbers to a **Tomb Banshee** who holds a potentially devastating short-ranged attack, while also sporting a higher manoeuvrability due to being skirmishers. This is where the Spirit Hosts hold their own advantage though, as non-skirmishers they're

able to remove an opponent's rank bonus if they manage to engage a unit from the sides or the rear and once they're there, the opponent will find them quite hard to get rid off! Notable enemy armies that hold a large amount of magical attacks to threaten these units with are Dwarfs (runic war machines count as magical), Wood Elves (magical arrows for their characters along with tree-spirits), Daemons of Chaos (they've got magical attacks, every last one of them!) and other Vampire Counts (Grave Guard, Black Knights and other ethereals) .

Last in the army list, but certainly not the least, come the terrifying **Varghulf** and **Black Coach**. The Varghulf is a very useful creature to have around since it combines survivability with both mobility and offensive prowess. It is an excellent deterrent against the fast-moving support troops of your opponent and also an adept war machine hunter as it'll tear through any crew with speed and ease. The Black Coach, as most other Chariots, can rarely be relied upon to take an enemy on by its lonesome. In a support charge it can wreak great damage however, and as long as you can manage to keep it away from anything with a Strength of 7 and above, you'll find that it is also exceedingly resilient with a high Toughness, its good armour save and ward save. If you're able to let your Coach absorb magical power dice (remember to roll for your opponent's base pool dice as well, even if none of his wizards are in range) it'll gradually become more and more powerful but you don't need to hold it back to let this happen, it is strong enough to damage anything in its original state already. Both of these choices also have the Vampire special rule which will allow non-vampires around them to march which can certainly be useful when they're operating out on a flank. They also cause Terror which is a useful weapon against the majority of armies out there.

Using a Combat Army on the Tabletop

Many of the guidelines in this section can also be applied to Vampire Counts armies of most other varieties and some will treat things that are really rather general. However, for the sake of completeness this part will deal with things that'd be good to keep in mind when playing a Vampire Counts army more geared towards combat.

First off we'll establish the underlying disposition for using the army. Even though you're going to be doing the vast majority of your damage in close combat you should not feel obliged to rush into battle the very first opportunity you get. While Vampires and other assorted Undead creatures are certainly powerful combatants, the fact is that there are indeed armies out there that will pretty reliably destroy anything we can throw at them in an individual scrap. The Warriors and Daemons of Chaos along with Dark Elves are examples of such offensively powerful opponents. The Undead infantry generally rely on weight of numbers and static combat resolution to defeat their enemies and you should always strive to play to these strengths. Keep your blocks supported either with more infantry or with other, more fast-moving units to combat the enemy's own support. Meet your opponent head-on and catch him in the flanks or rear with something else to remove his own static combat resolution and you'll soon be triumphant. Your Vampires and Wight Kings will play an important part here as your infantry will need their killing power in order to keep the combat resolution moving as far in your favour as possible and also to counter the enemy's own characters.

Secondly, while it is without doubt a great boon to be immune to psychology it does also bring with it a rather severe drawback – you're not allowed to elect “Flee” as a charge response but must instead stand firm and receive the attack. This can lead to some very painful situations if you're not careful with your movement as you will be forced to stand and receive any charges upon you unless you can manage to divert/redirect the enemy in due time. Therefore you should be careful with your movements, especially when it comes to your cavalry and even more especially so when there's enemy cavalry afoot. An inch too far could lead to the destruction of your

Black Knights (for example) without you being able to do much about it!

Thirdly, and this ties in with the paragraph above, the very process of redirecting an enemy will require a different approach than armies that aren't entirely immune to psychology. Where the living can choose to (attempt to, at least) escape an enemy charge and leave their attackers stumbling forward in a failed charge, the Vampire Counts will have to factor in the very likely destruction of the baiting unit as well as a potential overrun move from their enemy. Since this will be wholly determined by dice, make sure to give yourself a good margin of error when attempting to trap an enemy through re-direction, or else you might find that they've overrun right out of the arc of your counter charge. Units that are useful for these kind of sacrificial tasks are fast moving and relatively cheap ones such as Dire Wolves and Fell Bats. You can also use the spell Raise Dead to summon a line of Zombies and angle them in such a way that if the enemy charges them, they'll end up looking in a direction more favourable for yourself. This obviously requires that you've a Vampire with the spell in a good position to use it and that you'll get it through in the first place, hardly fail-safe!

The **Fourth** guideline to give you revolves around using the many available choices that the Vampire Counts have for *disruption*. Dire Wolves and Fell Bats are both highly manoeuvrable unit-types, able to nestle themselves behind enemy lines after a turn or two to begin march-blocking your enemy, as well as attacking vulnerable missile units and war machines. If you can deprive your enemy of the added speed that marching brings he'll be less able to react to your own movement. The army list also has a variety of options when it comes to mobile Terror-causing creatures, such as the Varghulf and Cairn Wraiths. You can also equip a hero-level Vampire to be a fast-moving Terror-causer with which you can disrupt your opponent. If you're able to disrupt your opponent in a fashion such as this (though you should be wary that the opponent just might be trying to do the very same to you!) you'll force him to deal with these nuisances instead of focusing entirely on the advance of the rest of your army. This will undoubtedly make it easier to fight the enemy on your terms!

Fifthly, something that you should definitely consider (practically all of the Warhammer armies could benefit from this) is to make some rudimentary plans for hunting the enemy Wizards. Wizards are typically quite squishy and also often cost quite a bit of points, making them viable targets for pretty much anything in your army. By removing enemy Wizards from the table you'll not only weaken your opponent's magic phase but you'll also strengthen your own due to facing less dispel dice. This makes it easy to see why hunting mages is a good idea. If your opponent fields his Wizards alone or in smaller, lighter units (such as missile troops), a group of Fell Bats or Dire Wolves could well get the job done (just beware of Stand and Shoot!). Alternatively, if you're able to get a unit of Black Knights into position they're quite apt at whacking mages who are hiding in units. If you employ a unit of Black Knights to be used in this way you should not pay the points to upgrade one of them to a champion. If your opponent is clever in his placement he can use the champion's character status to his advantage by locking him in a challenge, denying him the ability to strike at the Wizard. For this same reason is a Vampire character not the best choice when it comes to hunting mages, although they're far from poor at it. The Varghulf is a terrific mage hunter, as he is able to focus all of his attacks on a single model in base contact. Wraiths could also be used in this role but by chasing after Wizards you're actively hunting one of the few things that can actually harm your pricy ethereals.

Now, if a Wizard has taken to hiding himself in a large and powerful unit, or is in fact a powerful fighter/caster hybrid such as a Vampire, you'll likely have to commit a more sizeable part of your own army to get rid of the pesky Wizard. Alternatively you could take your chances and move in with a Varghulf or some Black Knights but do know that this will likely end in the loss of your mage hunter, even if they succeed in their task or not.

Lastly, the **Sixth** piece of advice to keep in mind is to be wary of committing anything to a combat in which Zombies are already in. Zombies really are poor combatants and if you're fighting some of the more offensively powerful opponents, a few were mentioned earlier, you're likely to be losing Zombies by the handful. Unless your reinforcements are very powerful close combatants themselves (Blood

Knights fit the bill rather well here) you could find yourself in a position where your total amount of combat resolution will be outdone by the amount of Zombies killed by the enemy, leading to the untimely destruction of both your Zombies *and* their would-be rescuers, all in one fell swoop. In situations like these it is often better to plan ahead and create a scheme that revolves around catching the enemy right after they've disposed of the Zombies. By going with estimates and averages you should be able to determine when your Zombies will be destroyed and raise more Zombies as needed (dice gods willing). If you're able to make it happen during the opponent's turn, you'll be free to react immediately thereafter!



Models by CurseofBeers

Constructing an Army List

The final section of this article will show you a pair of example army lists using the guidelines given earlier along with some brief commentaries of usage and deployment.

Let us begin with an army list of 2250 points.

Vampire Lord – Red Fury, Dread Knight, Dreadlance, Nightshroud, Cursed Book – 380

Vampire 1 – Nightmare, Dark Acolyte, Avatar of Death (Shield), Book of Arkhan, Enchanted Shield – 208

Vampire 2 – Infinite Hatred, The Flayed Hauberk, Sword of Battle, Talisman of the Lycni – 175

Wight King – Battle Standard, Barded Skeletal Steed, Sword of Kings – 145

20 Skeleton Warriors – Full Command, Warbanner – 205 * Vampire 1 join these *

18 Crypt Ghouls – Crypt Ghast – 152

20 Zombies – Musician – 84

7 Dire Wolves – Doom Wolf – 66

15 Grave Guard – Full Command, Banner of the Barrows – 255 * Vampire Lord and Wight King join these *

5 Black Knights – Musician – 128

5 Fell Bats – 100

Varghulf – 175

Varghulf – 175

This army totals **2248/2250** points and has got **7 Power Dice, 5 Dispel Dice and the Book of Arkhan.**

This army has a very good coverage of the Vampire special rule, which means that the army will be able to march at any given point. It also has a fair amount of fast-moving units such as the Dire Wolves, Fell Bats and Varghulfs, all of them able to cause disruption in the enemy ranks and hunt mages. These can also be deployed in a more loose fashion than you could do with infantry, as they're more readily able to re-deploy once the battle has started. Unless your enemy has included a similar amount of these "throwaway" deployment units you'll be able to create more favourable match-ups on the battle field. You'll note that I haven't assigned Vampire 2 to a specific unit and that is because he'll join whichever unit will provide him with the best opportunity to use his great speed. With 4 attacks, hatred and a 2+ armour save he will target the enemy's more vulnerable points, such as missile units and war machines. The real meat of the list lies in the Grave Guard and Skeleton Warrior units. These two will work together and cover each others' flanks. The Black Knights will either go after a suitable target such as enemy heavy cavalry or hang back and await a good time to launch a charge to support the infantry. Lastly, if the enemy army contains a ridden monster of any kind, the Dire Wolves will be on duty to attempt to lock it down for a turn through a challenge.



Model by BrushMistress

Next up is a list at the 1500 points level,

Vampire 1 – Dread Knight, Ghoulkin, Book of Arkhan, Enchanted Shield – 200 * General *

Vampire 2 – Dark Acolyte, Summon Ghouls, The Flayed Hauberk, Sword of Might – 185

Wight King – Battle Standard, Barded Skeletal Steed, Lance, Warbanner – 157

20 Crypt Ghouls – Crypt Ghast – 168 * General join these *

19 Crypt Ghouls – Crypt Ghast – 160 * Vampire 2 join these *

5 Dire Wolves – 40

5 Dire Wolves - 40

7 Black Knights – Barding, Full Command, Royal Standard of Strigos – 271 * Wight King join these *

5 Fell Bats – 100

Varghulf – 175

This list total **1496/1500** points and has got **5 Power Dice, 4 Dispel Dice** and the **Book of Arkhan**.

This list will work in a rather direct approach, being a rather fast-moving force able to cross the table by turn 3. Like the larger list above, this one also contains a number of fast-moving units that can be deployed first in order to lure out the enemy's major pieces, letting you deploy accordingly. Both Ghouls units will have a decent chance at defeating any given enemy thanks to the Vampires that lead them but the greater hammer is obviously the unit of Black Knights. Staying close to the Varghulf will let them march until they've reached a position from where they can strike.

For an additional example of a combat Vampire Counts army list, do take a look at Swissdictator's article on how to field a themed Von Carstein army.

Anyway, I hope that I haven't bored you with the content of this article and I also hope that I've gotten the mechanics of fielding an army such as this across. If you and/or your opponent are beginning to feel bored with the Vampire Counts and you haven't tried it already, fielding a combat force could well revive your interest in the Undead. Remember, balance is the key to most things.

Have fun!



Model by CurseofBeers

FIXING VAMPIRE COUNTS

Necromancy Spells by Danceman

I am only going back one book this time. Back to the book where we still had to choose our vampires from Bloodlines and, indeed, it had an impact on the rest of your choices. What is so special about this book and why do I bring it up in this article? To understand the recent outrage over the latest book you need to know about the book which preceded our current one.

The first difference is that the general was even more important than it is the current instalment. Why, you might ask? It was the only character which had a “marching aura”. There were no hero Vampires pushing your army forwards, no Varghulf or Blood Knights. Another very significant difference was there was no such thing as necromancy spells, all our spells were treated like any other spell. Our Invocation of Nehek (commonly shortened to IoN), which to many is a trademark spell for VC, could only be cast once. The difference, however, was that casting levels which in relation to the amount of models raised or wounds healed increased by the “power level” you wanted from the spell. The second significant difference in this spell was that you couldn’t heal all your units like you can today. Another spell, which may be our most powerful one, is the Vanhel’s Danse Macabre. There is a big difference in this spell as well. In the old book the spell we have in the current book was in fact two different spells in the previous book. There was the movement spell and there was the combat spell.

I am going to ignore our spell Raise Dead here as it is not the spell that is up for discussion and not the spell which is causing the outrage against VC.

Necromancy spells;

Invocation of Nehek:

The problem with these spells are very into the face, namely, the ability to cast them over and over until your power dice runs out. I believe it wouldn’t have been nearly as bad if it weren’t for three factors: low casting value, vampire powers and the Skull Staff. This allows us VC players to reliably cast this spell on a single dice. If you have the appropriate summoning powers and the Skull Staff you are casting our innate spell Invocation of Nehek on 3+. Even if you just roll a 3 when casting IoN it goes through as casting value of 5, and if you roll a 6 it goes through on a casting value of 8. This often means your opponent will need to expend 2 dispel dice to “reliably” stop it. This wouldn’t have been such a problem if it was a normal spell but now you can cast this spell a great deal of times in a single magic phase. Let’s assume we’re using the standard caster Lord with Skull Staff, Master of the Black Arts, Forbidden Lore/Dark Acolyte and the basic level 3 wizard upgrade. He generates 5 or 6 dice on his own and can use 2 dice from the basic pool. That is 7 IoNs per turn, 8 if you go for Dark Acolyte instead. Imagine standing up to that kind of magic phase, a magic phase that will never miscast and can heal up the VC army with terrifying efficiency.

Vanhel’s Danse Macabre:

Ah, the spell that wins games. Not only it is a good spell but we can cast it as many times as we can. As said, this spell is a game winner, hands down. We VC players can pull off manoeuvres other armies only can dream of (bar Tomb Kings) and we can do it in a barrage of spells. We have another tool which makes us even more dangerous, namely, the Book of Arkhan which is a bound item with VDM. Now we got a relatively low cast movement spell and a bound item with the very same spell. And of course we can charge in this manner as well, which makes it even worse.

The synergy effect:

These two spells together can be used with horrific efficiency.

- Raise up a new unit and VDM into position (a charge, redirector etc etc).
- Bring a new unit into combat more quickly while the opponent already fighting of your own units.

This usually means you'll outnumber and break ranks.

"The Fix":

This is where the debate starts to get heated but I have distinguished them as best I could into different categories:

- IoN functions exactly like Gut magic, i.e. increases in casting value each time cast. First is cast with 4+ then 8+ then 16+, or something to that effect.
- IoN adding +2 to cast for every time you cast IoN per wizard. The effect does not stack up, so you can still cast it on the normal value on each wizard but for each time the wizard attempt to cast IoN again increase it by +2.
- IoN taken straight from the old book.

For VDM there has only been one suggestion that makes sense for the sake of balance. It is simply to make it a normal spell. No recasts, just a normal spell like everyone else got. A very simple and effective solution which deals with the biggest issues.

So in conclusion it would seem that there are two fairly simple solutions to IoN. Either treat it as Gut Magic or increase the casting value by +2 for each **attempt** (not successful cast). For VDM, just treat it as a normal spell.

You may not feel the necromancy spells needs fixing in which case you can ignore this article and go on with your business as usual, or have other ideas but these are the ideas that works the best with the current game mechanic without complicating things too much.



Model by Vash1313

Check out Rites of War

Rites of War has an open & friendly atmosphere to people looking for that much less structured experience. Like other sites, RoW is about meeting people of like attitudes and is open to Players of any calling looking for a board of friends.

We have a small, but active membership and are a tight knit group.

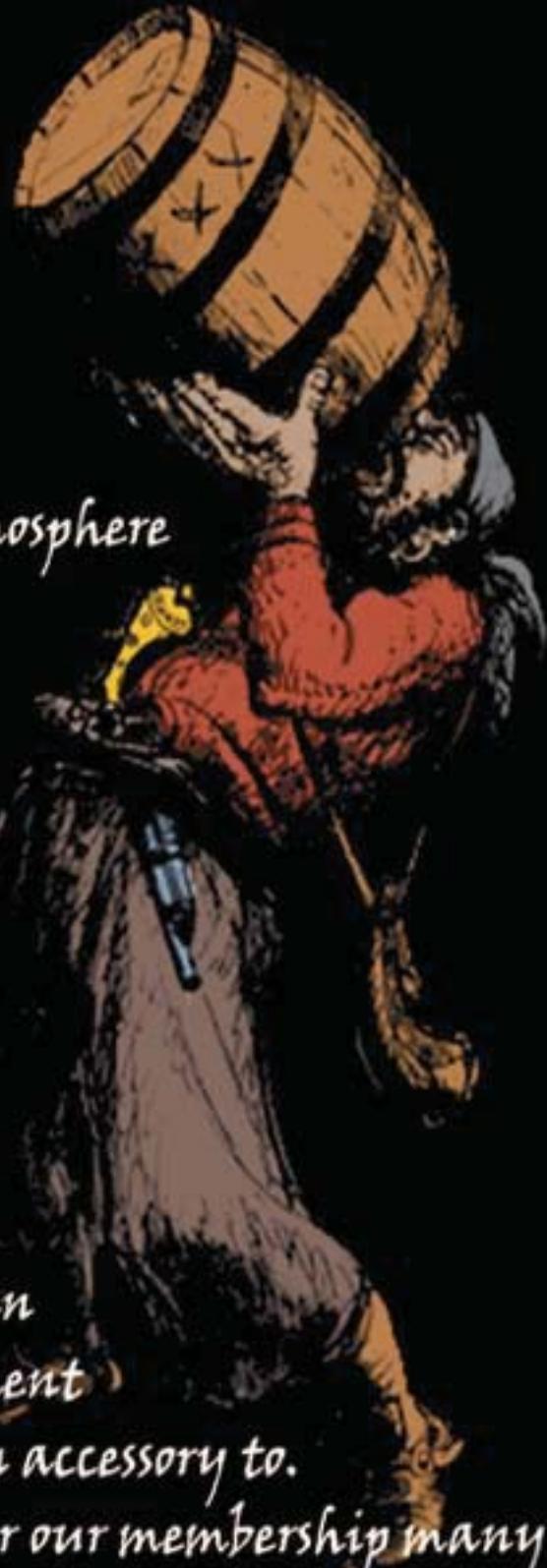
RoW is akin to your local Pub more than the local GW store. This isn't a replacement

for other sites but an accessory to.

We offer our membership many services. From Army Blogs and contests. to an active Off-Topic

If RoW sounds like a place for you. Head over and draft a pint on my tab. - Servius

ritesofwar.org



TO WAR!

A Battle Report by Count Flapula

Hello and welcome to my Tides of Chaos tournament report!

This tournament took place in the south of Britain in the height of summer, a well-respected event that brings scores of players. As I have done for the last couple of years, I took my trusty Vampire Counts to compete with the best of 'em. However whilst usually I've brought a Vampire Lord on foot, who slogs it across the battlefield and tries to do as much damage on the way, I decided for a far more direct army this time as show by the army opposite.

Yes, a Zombie Dragon supported by two underlings riding their own Hellsteeds! As this event was comped (Where a panel of judges rate your army and allocate you a score that affects who you play first, and can change the score of a game), I didn't want to use any of the cookie-cutter builds, not that I do anyway! But this time I decided to try out Aura of Dark Majesty on my Vampire Lord, which is a bit different from the usual effective Red Fury builds. He would require a bit more finesse to reap the rewards! Also of note is his only save is 2+ from his magic armour- with no ward saves, if he takes a bad hit, he's probably going down.

His army is built to support him, with the infantry steadily advancing as the Dragon and Hellsteeds surround the enemy and force them to engage (Not always so easy!). The Fell Bats can go after war machines or weak enemies, or simply get in the way, whilst the Varghulf is an excellent hunter as we all know by now.

My army was rated zero for comp, which means it was neither too nasty, nor too soft- exactly as I'd aimed! However Vampire Counts, being a top army suffered a bit, so I'd be taking a little hit in some games- but only against really weak armies. All fine by me! The first battle report has been posted on Carpe Noctem, so you can go there to examine how I scored against a Lizardmen army lead by an Oldblood on Carnosaur... or you can read on for now, as I

faced a second Lizardmen army with an Oldblood on Carnosaur- what are the chances?!

Vampire Lord

~*Zombie Dragon*

~*Level 3*

~*Aura of Dark Majesty*

~*Infinite Hatred*

~*Walking Death*

~*Balefire Spike*

~*Book of Arkhan*

~*Flayed Hauberk*

Vampire

~*Hellsteed*

~*Infinite Hatred*

~*Nightshroud*

~*Dispel Scroll*

~*Biting Blade*

Vampire Battle Standard Bearer

~*Hellsteed*

~*Avatar of Death (HA + Shield)*

~*Wristbands of Black Gold*

~*Black Periapt*

23 Skeleton Warriors

~*Full Command*

~*War Banner*

20 Zombies

~*Standard*

~*Musician*

10 Crypt Ghouls

2 x 3 Fell Bats

6 Black Knights

~*Barding*

~*Full Command*

~*Royal Banner of Strigos*

3 Wraiths

~*Banshee*

Varghulf

Game 2 vs Lizardmen

Oldblood

~Light Armour

~Shield

~Blade of Realities

~Carnosaur

Scar-Veteran

~Light Armour

~Shield

~Burning Blade of Chotec

~Glyph Necklace

Skink Chief

~War-spear

~Ancient Stegadon

2 x 15 Saurus,

Full Command

2 x 10 Skinks

2 x 10 Skink skirmishers

2 x 3 Kroxigor

Ancient Stegadon

Salamander

A very similar army compared to my first game, but with added Kroxigor this time... and no magic defence! The Lizardmen set up with the Kroxigor and Carnosaur Lord on the right, Saurus mostly central and Skinks all over the place. I went for a very simple deployment with my fliers central, flanked on either side by my infantry and Knights on the right.

The enemy's two main characters deployed next to other units, and I thought my opponent was being smart so as to avoid any Wind of Undeath nastiness. However, he assured me they weren't in the units, and so on turn 1, a mighty casting saw two full Spirit Host bases arise in full view of the Lizardmen army, march blocking and generally getting in the way! With zero magic defence, there was nothing they could do about it this time.



The Wraiths made a nuisance of themselves on the left, but an overrun against a Salamander went too far and they were charged by a block of Saurus, the Scar-Veteran in them doing a fair amount of damage with his magic blade. The Spirit Hosts tried to help out as well but they were just fodder and were vaporised easily enough. My Lord risked charging the Ancient Stegadon, which stood and shot off several wounds from my Dragon- this was a risk I was happy to take, however, as the wounds were easily healed back. The Stegadon was annihilated and my Lord flew into the second Saurus block, which also died very easily. Meanwhile the Lizardmen tried to counterattack, but the Carnosaur was blocked in by my Black Knights, who charged some Skinks, killed them and overran into the big dino. The Oldblood only had two wounds left thanks to the Wind of Undeath, but the Knights' attacks could not finish him off, and they were destroyed utterly by the Blade of Realities.

The Kroxigor tried to join in the Lord's fight, but the Fell Bats flew in front of them. Another unit of Skinks charged them first to help point the Kroxigor in the right direction, but this meant fewer Kroxigor were in contact, and the Bats survived a turn, long enough for the Ghouls to flank the Skinks and easily slaughter them, the lone Fell Bat survivor running down the Kroxigor who broke due to overwhelming combat resolution- this was obviously too much for their comrades, who panicked as well!

The two Fell Bat units then scoured the back lines, charging stragglers and running down fleeing units. Some brave Skinks tried to flank

and destroy my Zombies, but the Varghulf saved the day- I didn't want to lose any more points!



Meanwhile my Lord killed the second Stegadon, and put a mighty Curse of Years onto the Scar-Veteran's Saurus. Not many died to the effects of the spell, but the Scar-Veteran - who must have been centuries older than his brethren - died within two magic phases! It was not especially important however, as my Zombie Dragon then smashed them in the rear and wiped them out.

Thanks to the sacrifice of the Black Knights, the Skeletons were able to charge the Oldblood, taking several casualties a turn from the beast and rider, but all it would take was one lucky turn... just as the Ghouls were about to charge in the flank and add more static combat resolution to the fight, the Oldblood lost combat and fled- and boy did he flee, going 16", right off the table!

With all the enemy characters dead it was all a matter of cleaning up the last few survivors, who did not put up much of a fight. With a massive win, this gave me a 10-0 victory, and a leg up to table 3 for game 3!

2749 - 566 to the Vampire Counts.

Game 3 vs Vampire Counts

Ah, some good old Vamp on Vamp action! My opponent seemed fairly new to the army, but had clearly been doing well. One of the first things he did was to hand over a copy of his army list, written out in full, with magic items and bloodlines included. This, as with most tournaments, was a "closed list" affair, so this was not at all expected, however I responded similarly and let him go over my army.

The enemy Vampire army was rather balanced, and contained:

Vampire Lord

- ~*Helm of Commandment*
- ~*Walach's Bloody Hauberk*
- ~*Power Stone*
- ~*Summon Ghouls*
- ~*Forbidden Lore*
- ~*Ghoulkin*

Vampire

- ~*Avatar of Death (Great weapon)*
- ~*Talisman of Lycni*

Vampire

- ~*Avatar of Death (Great weapon)*

Wight King BSB

- ~*Barded Skeletal Steed*
- ~*Lance*

2 x 14 Crypt Ghouls

- ~*Crypt Ghasts*

20 Crypt Ghouls

- ~*Crypt Ghasts*

10 Dire Wolves

2 Corpse Carts with Balefire

20 Grave Guard

- ~*Full Command*

8 Black Knights

- ~*Barding*
- ~*Full Command*
- ~*Banner of the Barrows*

4 Wraiths

So although I describe it as balanced, it had some nasty elements, like the massive Grave Guard unit and Helm of Command, with twin-linked Corpse Carts. But there were also some rather curious choices, like the massive Dire Wolf unit! The deployment surprised me some, as the Lord and Grave Guard went behind the Ghoul units, the flanking units each with a Vampire. The enemy's fast elements went on my left, whilst the Wraiths went on my right.



I matched the Wraiths with my Black Knights and two Vampires by a square set of obstacles, whilst my infantry went across the line with Wraiths for back-up and the Varghulf towards the left. The Ghouls bundled forwards and the enemy got the first turn. He was tempted to send his fast Vampire into my Black Knights, but wisely decided against it. His inexperience showed as his Dire Wolves were well out of range of his Vampires for marching- although they could still get out of the Black Knights way, this meant they would cause me no problems for a while.

His magic was not especially powerful, but neither was mine, nearly all spell casting attempts of mine in the first two turns failed by just the amount that the two Corpse Carts affected them by!

My army started to try and get round the enemy, with the Dragon eager for blood and bones. My opponent thought I had made a couple of mistakes, and charged Ghouls into Wraiths hoping to crumble them, and his Wraiths into my Dragon. But with the Cloud of Flies, they could barely hit, and my Lord casually did enough wounds with his Balefire

Spike to ensure that the entire unit would be crumbled by CR, and not even impeded for a turn. Nice.

I added to the enemy's problems by charging my Knights into another unit of Ghouls with a Vampire- although they had ASF, I banked on the Vampire not doing enough damage. And sure enough I got lucky, he only killed one, whilst a Killing Blow in return ended his existence, and the Knights began to see off his retinue.

However the ASF on everything and the -1 to cast was still proving very helpful, so I decided that the Corpse Carts had to die, and next my Varghulf charged one whilst my Lord charged the other. Thanks to the flaming lance my Lord cleared up with ease, although the Varghulf didn't quite manage to destroy his until the enemy's turn.

The enemy Knights hammered into the Skeleton block and began to slowly cripple them with the Dire Wolves eventually joining in on the flank to help destroy them quicker. But while that was happening, the Varghulf smashed into the flank of the enemy Vampire Lord's Grave Guard. He began tearing at them and survived undamaged, but the Grave Guard won combat and turned to face their enemy, the Vampire Lord managing to kill the Varghulf outright in his turn!

However the Vampires were encircling their prey and desperate attempts at casting Van Hel's Danse Macabre were unsuccessful. The Zombie Dragon with Vampire Lord, 4 surviving Black Knights and the Battle Standard on Hellsteed all smashed into the Grave Guard's rear, with the Nightshroud Vampire nipping around the flank and being Dansed in herself. After the dust had settled from the massive combat, all the Grave Guard had been terminated, and the Vampire Lord had 5 ward saves to take... he'd have to be lucky to pass three and survive...

But he didn't, the Lord was dead and the rest of his army began to crumble, including a 6-6 rolled for the Black Knights (Although that would only crumble two thanks to the presence of the BSB).

I could have just sat back and enjoyed ripping the fangs from the interloper's mouth plus a large victory at this point, but wanted total victory. My Lord flew round the flank of the Black Knights, and Dansed himself in, killing some of the Knights. Meanwhile my Nightshroud Vampire parked herself in front of a small unit of Ghouls with the other enemy Vampire in it, and dared them to charge. They did, and she coolly killed her enemy before my reinforcements arrived to relieve her.

Next turn, the enemy Hell Knight moved over to challenge my Vampire Lord. When my Lord failed to kill the unit champion, we both knew what was going to happen next. Two attacks needing 5+ to hit... two hits...

Killing Blow on 6... there we go, my Vampire Lord, dead!

My army's crumbling was not too terrible, however, with 600 points of Vampires and my own BSB nearby to mitigate it. The Dragon managed to kill the impudent Hell Knight several times over, and the Vampires kept him healed. My Zombies, Bats, Wraiths and Ghouls all crumbled by the end of the battle but a single Black Knight survived to retain points for his unit and a captured standard and the Dragon finished the game on 3 wounds, after killing all of the Knights and crumbling the Wight King, so gave up no points. Despite the turn 5 flub which saw my Lord die, I still had it in the bag, for a nice 7-3 win.

Wouldn't want to be on table 1 now, would I? ;)

2588 - 1618 to the Vampire Counts (My ones, that is!)

Game 4 vs Lizardmen

More Lizardmen! This time there was no Carnosaur but still no Slann or Terradons either, I was leading a charmed campaign! However, there were two Engines of the Gods...

Skink Priest

~*Engine of the Gods*
~2 Scrolls

Skink Priest

~*Engine of the Gods*
~*Rod of the Storm*

Scar-Veteran

~*Cold One*
~*Light Armour*
~*Shield*
~*Sword of Battle*

5 x 10 Skinks

6 Saurus Cavalry

~*Full Command*
~*Huanchi's Blessed Totem*

2 x 3 Kroxigor

~*Ancient*

6 Chameleon Skinks

3 Salamanders

The enemy placed their Engines slap-bang in the middle, flanked by Kroxigor and Saurus Cavalry. I was on the same table as the previous game, with the same hedge for protection, so deployed similarly. The Lizardmen took first turn, and didn't move too much. The magic phase saw a small Lightning Bolt cast on my Nightshroud Vampire, who used her scroll to prevent it. The next lightning Bolt spell went on my BSB, but I rolled a 1-1 in my 3 dice dispel attempt. 3 wounds were caused, and I failed two of my 3+ ward save rolls, so that was my BSB dead straight out. To heap further insult upon the injuries already suffered, yet another lightning bolt spell was cast, this time on my Varghulf, dealing three wounds to it, all unsaved!!

After an appalling first turn, I aggressively sent my army forwards, the Banshee just managing to reach screaming range of the Chameleons, and killing enough to panic them off the table. Magic saw me burning scrolls but still healing my Varghulf a little, as he and my other Vampire held back for fear of poison darts.

The enemy responded by getting into position for more damage, the Salamanders roasting numerous Zombies with their flaming attacks. At least his magic did no damage this time. Next turn it was on, as my Dragon smashed straight into one of the Engines, killing the Stegadon and running down the Skink Priest. As the picture shows this was really quite risky, as if I'd failed to do enough damage, I'd be getting a Stegadon in the flank and a Burning Alignment (or two!).



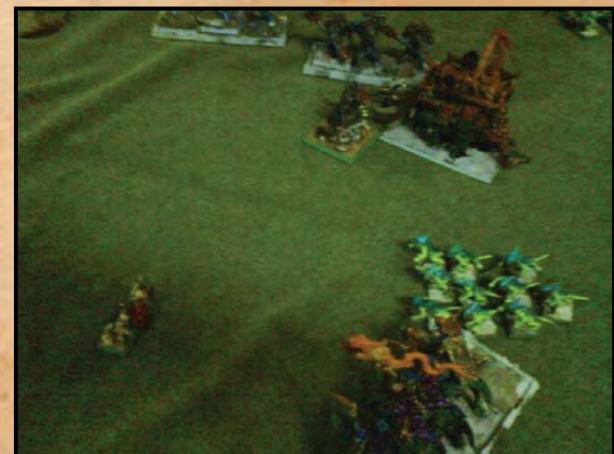
The Fell Bats also started getting in the way of the enemy and charged some Skinks but did not break them. The Zombie Dragon had pursued off the table and so was safe from the Engine's Burning Alignment, which melted some Zombies but left a wound on the Fell Bats- any more than that, and the Skinks fighting them would have been free to shoot their blowpipes! The remaining Skink Priest made a little mistake in his casting and ended up wounding himself instead, which was nice. Our cavalry engaged each other, but the Lizardmen came out on top thanks to their Scar-Veteran leading the fight.

The Wraiths continued their reign of terror, and started butchering the Salamanders, eventually running them off the table. The Dragon came back on and charged the other Engine through Vanhel's Danse...but didn't do so well this time,

leaving the Stegadon alive and kicking! The Dragon was on three wounds left, but by all rights should be fine.

Magic phase: Burning Alignment: 6 hits, 3 hit Dragon, all 3 wound and kill the Dragon. 3 hit the Vampire Lord and do 2 wounds. The only hope left was that the combat phase would go a bit better, and my Lord killed the Priest with some handy overkill... only to be stepped on and killed by the Ancient Stegadon. Oh dear.

The Wraiths had been in perfect position to charge some Kroxitgor, and my Hellsteed Vampire and Varghulf were also in good position for some tasty counter charges. The army crumbled rapidly and left me with just the two Vampires, both facing the Stegadon that had done so much damage. The two crashed into the Stegadon, hoping to rip it to pieces and avenge my Lord.



8 attacks with hatred and S5 later, the Stegadon was untouched, and he stepped on my Hellsteed Vampire and killed her, too. It was looking like game over with Saurus Cavalry about to flank the Varghulf (not that it really has a flank), but they failed Stupidity and so would not get to join the fight! Calling on its inhuman strength, the Varghulf finally killed the Ancient Stegadon, before eyeing up its next target: a little unit of Skinks seeking to claim a table quarter. The vicious Vampire charged them, so terrified that they fled, but not far enough, and the game ended with only the Varghulf left, but he'd still claimed a fearsome toll on the enemy. The Lizardmen won 7-3.

1471 - 2474 to the Lizardmen.

Game 5 vs Daemons

Me and my previous opponent both went on to fight against Daemons in our next game, only he got the really nasty army with a Bloodthirster, and I got the merely nasty list!

Herald of Nurgle

~BSB

~*Standard of Sundering*

Herald of Slaanesh

~*Steed of Slaanesh*

~*Siren Song*

10 Daemonettes

~*Champion*

~*Standard*

10 Daemonettes

2 x 10 Horrors

10 Plaguebearers

~*Standard*

2 x 5 Furies

2 x 6 Flesh Hounds

5 Flesh Hounds

5 Seekers of Slaanesh

~*Siren Standard*

2 x 6 Flamers

The main Daemonic infantry went central with Heralds, a unit of Horrors went on each flank, and the cavalry mostly went on my right flank, with some for the other side of the table. All the Flamers hovered around a forest in the enemy deployment zone - they wouldn't come out unless I made them! I knew in this game my flying Vampires would be the most important, the Hellsteed Vampires hid behind troops not wanting to be *Siren Song*-ed but the Dragon wouldn't mind. One unit of Skeletons protected my right flank along with the Varghulf, and the Wraiths stayed left, where forests would allow them to duck out of danger.

The Daemons took first turn, and the infantry headed forwards, almost giving my Dragon a perfect flank charge on the Daemonettes, but no such luck! The cavalry on the right rushed the flank, the others a bit more wary.

In my first turn, the Herald Sirened in my Dragon Lord who began to work on the chomping. The Fell Bats flew up onto the left hill, within range of the Furies. My Lord used Vanhel's Danse to charge the Fell Bats into the Furies, who beat their opponents and wiped them out, hurrah! My Lord slaughtered the Alluress but insane courage meant the Daemonettes took no extra damage.

Of course, the Plaguebearer unit flanked my Dragon, adding the flank and BSB bonus- the BSB himself was out of the combat. The Flamers peeked out of the forest, but had no good targets yet. The 10 Horrors on the hill thought about charging my Fell Bats but decided not to.

The Herald of Slaanesh was killed comfortably by the Dragon, who took a wound in return and crumbled a tiny bit more.

In my turn the Varghulf tried to get into position to charge the intact Daemonette unit, but my second unit of Fell Bats had to flap along his flank to block him from the scary Flamers, whilst a screen of Zombies also had to be raised to stop them! The left Fell Bats went into the Horrors whilst my Nightshroud Vampire nipped around their flank. Magic also saw the Zombie Dragon healed up to full wounds, easy without the Standard of Sundering affecting the Invocation of Nehek.

The big fight continued, with several Daemonettes killed and the Dragon harmed again, and a win for the Vampires this time! The Wraiths started getting into annoying positions for the enemy and killed two Flesh Hounds thanks to my Lord's Aura of Dark Majesty. A couple more Daemonettes dissolved but the Plaguebearers remained resolute. The Fell Bats and Horrors fought to a standstill with no wounds caused but the Bats crumbled a little.

All in all, it wasn't looking too bad but the cavalry was starting to get around the flanks and the remaining 5 Furies rear-charged my Lord to add additional combat resolution. This worked well for the Daemons, as my Lord kept killing Daemonettes but the Dragon abjectly failed to harm the Furies, leaving the Daemons with much greater static combat resolution- and the Dragon crumbled to just one wound left! The Flamers matched their efforts and easily annihilated the Zombies screening my Varghulf, and reduced him to one wound remaining.

Of course, the Dragon was healed up and kept munching Daemonic ass, whilst the Varghulf was not so lucky- although he charged the Daemonettes, he only killed 1 and crumbled in return. My two Vampires joined the fight, the Nightshroud Vamp aiding the Fell Bats in killing the Horrors, and my BSB hitting the Furies in the rear. Although he did kill one, a Fury managed to wound him in return, and after a shaky round of combat, the undead lost by 1, but the BSB's presence stopped him from crumbling. The Banshee again did a stellar job, killing a Flesh Hound to leave just two left in the unit.

The massive mêlée continued, the two Flesh Hounds turning to join in. The Furies finally died, as did the Daemonettes, leaving my Dragon in a fine position, turning to face the enemy. All 12 Flamers got into firing range of the BSB who was now stranded out of combat (albeit healed again), and unleashed a massive barrage- nearly 60 shots in total! The first set got one through his thick armour and powerful ward save, then the next set saw him suffer 5 wounds, 4 saved by his armour. With just one 3+ ward save to take, I got ready to remove him... but passed it!

Next turn it was time for revenge, as the last of the Horrors crumbled, leaving my Nightshroud Vampire free to flank the two Flesh Hounds, killing them comfortably. My BSB could see the Plaguebearers from his position, so charged them too with only one thing in mind - bring the enemy BSB into combat! If he refused my Lord's challenge he would no longer provide regeneration to the unit, so he took up the challenge... my Lord managed only one wound even with his flaming lance, but the Dragon

finished off the disgusting Herald! With victory in sight, the Plaguebearers crumbled some more...

...but then more enemies arrived, in the form of the Daemonettes who had killed my Varghulf! My Lord charged them, clipping the Flamers and bringing them into the fight. Again my Dragon nearly died but he killed them all... all but one, leaving the remaining Flamers unable to target my Lord with their shooting- though they finally claimed my BSB. My Lord flew over and Dansed into the 6 surviving Flamers, whilst my Nightshroud Vamp flew to the corner to raise precious quarter-claiming Zombies.

The last turn saw my Lord fly to the flank of the Flesh Hounds that had claimed my Skeletons' banner, kill them to reclaim it, leaving not much left. Although I'd done a lot of damage, I'd taken a lot as well. Because of the comp difference, I essentially gained +300VPs- but either way, it was a minor victory to me: 6-4 win! Would have been 7-3 if I hadn't remembered my killed raised Zombies at the last second...

2017 - 1413 to the Vampire Counts.

Game 6 vs High Elves

By game six of a two-day tournament, most players can be separated into one of two categories: those just getting started, and those who are knackered. My opponent for this game had already played against three other Vampire Count armies, but was eager to kick some more undead ass. I on the other hand, was tired, the dim light of the hall and muggy summer heat making me a bit light in the head. I still recorded the game in detail however, for a full-sized battle report.

However, I usually see High Elves as a relatively easy opponent, as long as you know what you're doing and dictate the game on your own terms. With a relatively magic-heavy army facing me, this shouldn't be too difficult, as combat is where the game would be won or lost...eventually.

Archmage

- ~Level 4
- ~Seerstaff
- ~Loremaster's Cloak
- ~Dispel Scroll
- ~Great Eagle

Dragon Mage

- ~Level 2
- ~Silver Wand
- ~Ring of Fury

Noble Battle Standard Bearer

- ~Sword of Might
- ~Helm of Fortune
- ~Dragon Armour
- ~Shield
- ~Barded Elven Steed

15 Spearmen

- ~Full Command
- ~War Banner

10 Archers

5 Dragon Princes

5 Dragon Princes

5 Dragon Princes

14 Swordmasters

- ~Musician
- ~Blademaster
- ~Talisman of Loec

Great Eagle

2 Repeater Bolt Throwers

The Archmage took the Lore of High Magic, giving him Drain Magic, Curse of Arrow Attraction, Fury of Khaine, Flames of the Phoenix and Vaul's Unmaking. The Dragon Mage rolled Fireball, Fiery Blast and Conflagration of Doom, giving him a fair load of firepower. Meanwhile my Lord got Raise Zombies, Wind of Undeath and Summon Undead Horde, my Battle Standard Bearer got Raise Zombies and Vanhel's Danse Macabre, and the Nightshroud Vampire got Gaze of Nagash.

Deployment

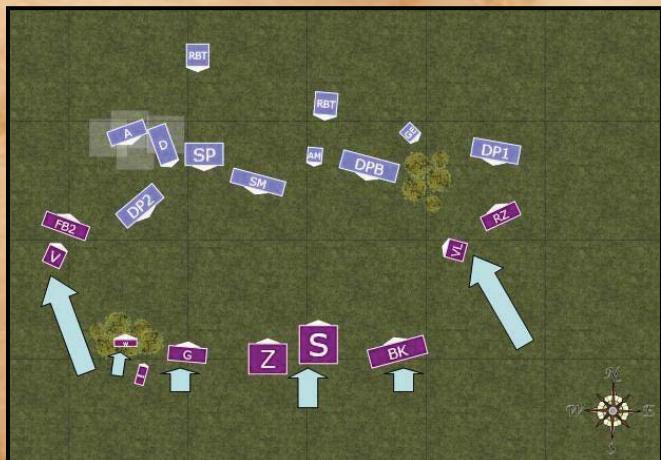
The armies deployed as in the diagram, the Elven infantry staring down the Undead, with my Zombie Dragon hiding behind a forest to avoid being peppered with shots for one turn. The High Elves won the roll for first turn, decided to leave it and just as I was considering my first turn's moves changed their mind and decided to go first after all. Game on!



Turn 1



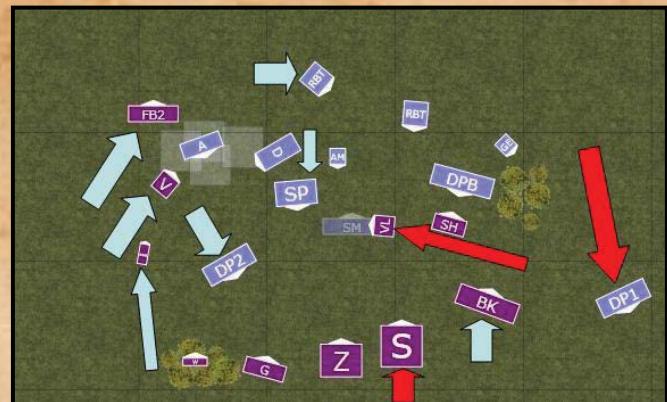
The High Elves advanced with determination, two units of Dragon Princes each looking to get round both of my flanks and the Elven Mages flying into range to magic my troops. The first turn's magic saw a Fury of Khaine let through on the right-hand unit of Fell Bats, unexpectedly killing them all with a couple of wounds to spare! My dice had been saved for the final spell of the turn, which turned out to be Curse of Arrow Attraction on the Nightshroud Vampire who was now in the firing line for the two Bolt Throwers. A miscast made me think I would get away with this one, until the miscast made the spell irresistible instead, with the Archmage forgetting it. In the shooting phase the Bolt Throwers multishot and made good use of the Curse to kill my little Vampire outright, with the second one hoping to get my Battle Standard Bearer as well- but failing to wound.



The death of my Nightshroud Vampire was a great blow to my army, as I had intended to plonk her straight in front of the Swordmasters,

so that they would charge and she would start slicing and dicing. Alas, it was not to be. The army instead sought to envelop the Asur, the Dragon boldly exposing his flank to the right Dragon Princes- especially bold seeing as my Lord could not actually harm the noble Elves due to their Dragon Armour! To stop them my Lord raised a new unit of Zombies to divert the Dragon Princes, with other magic attempts being dispelled.

Turn 2

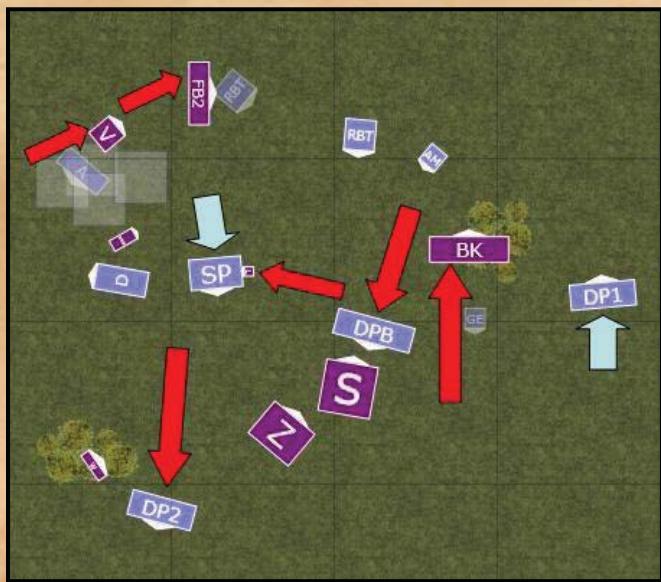


The Elves continued their advance, the Swordmasters boldly placing themselves in front of my Skeletons and Vampire Lord, their Champion moving to the flank in case the Vampire Lord would charge. The right Dragon Princes smashed into and destroyed the raised Zombies easily but they were now out of position. The High Elves magic continued to batter the Undead with the Dragon Mage blasting a couple of wounds off of the Varghulf. In addition the Archmage got Vaul's Unmaking through on the Vampire Lord, his armour becoming useless. The Repeater Bolt Throwers had few decent targets at this point, but one of them shot at my Lord, dealing two wounds to both the Dragon and the Lord- I was speechless! At least, I was for a couple of minutes, then I got down to table-level and noticed that the Bolt Thrower couldn't possibly see my Dragon through the forest... plus we remembered that the Bolt Thrower had actually moved that turn as well due to lack of targets. With relief I removed the wound tokens by my Lord!

I decided it was time to take the fight to the High Elves and my Lord and Skeletons both charged the Swordmasters. The Swordmasters managed to fail both their terror test AND their fear test, fleeing away from the Skeletons, and easily caught and slaughtered by my Lord who excitedly revelled in the carnage. That is, until I realized that this meant he was now right in front of two bolt throwers, and we'd already had a premonition about how nasty they could be...

Magic saw the Varghulf slightly healed, and a massive Wind of Undeath dealing several wounds to the Elves, the Loremaster's Cloak protecting the Archmage from the damage, but not able to stop several ghosts from popping up in front of the Dragon Princes with the Noble. The Banshee was close enough to scream at one unit of Dragon Princes but that didn't harm the brave Elves.

Turn 3

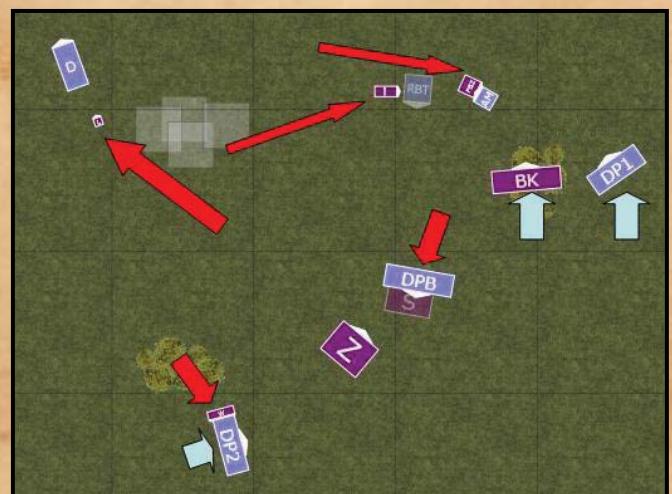


The Asur continued to exert their authority this turn with Dragon Princes charging through and destroying the Ghouls - plus the Battle Standard Bearer using his Sword of Might to easily dispatch several ghosts and overrun close to the Skeletons. The magic continued to cripple my forces, harming the Dragon, wounding the BSB on his Hellsteed and reducing the Varghulf to one wound. Then in the shooting phase the Bolt Throwers let rip, their 12 bolts killing the Dragon and leaving my Vampire lord on just one wound. It wasn't looking good!

Picking a new model out for my Vampire Lord, I was faced with many choices. Perhaps the old B-movie style Carstein, to represent his weak status? Or Vlad to represent his Majesty? Nah, I went and got out my Konrad model, and played him accordingly- charging him right into the flank of the Spearmen who failed their fear test. The Black Knights charged into and through the not-so-Great Eagle, whilst the Skeletons lined up in front of the Dragon Princes, ready to take the charge and tarpit the Knights. The Wraiths poked their noses out of the forest, although once again the Banshee scream was ineffective. The Varghulf tasted blood and hit the Archers - whilst they couldn't stand and shoot, it was fortunate that I had healed him (And my Battle Standard) of a wound in the magic phase, as their Speed of Asuryan allowed them to strike first and knock him back down to one wound before he killed a few, the survivors breaking and being run down. The Fell Bats also went in for the kill, taking out a Bolt Thrower though they were reduced to one model in the process.

My Lord happily killed several Spearmen but the resolute militia held on and won the combat thanks to their musician. Although my Lord didn't lose a wound thanks to the presence of my BSB nearby, they did turn on the spot to get more attacks in on my Lord for the next turn.

Turn 4

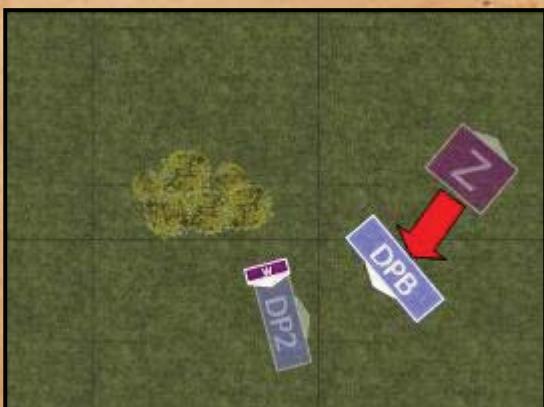


Was it all over? The central Dragon Princes charged the Skeletons whilst their comrades repositioned themselves. The Archmage put himself out of sight of the Black Knights who were advancing through the forest.

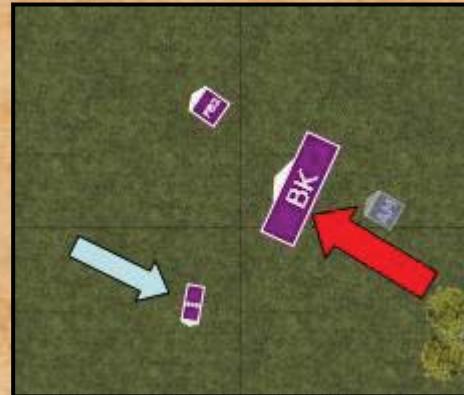
This turn finally saw the Varghulf roasted to death but the rest of the firepower could not destroy the Fell Bats. The Dragon Princes smashed apart many of the Skeletons, but not enough to demolish the entire unit. The Vampire Lord won combat by one against the Spearmen, who failed their break test thanks to his Aura of Dark Majesty. He ran down the Elves, slaughtering them all, and eyed his next target...

The Dragon Mage was in his sights and he went in to drain his blood whilst the Battle Standard charged the remaining Bolt Thrower and the lone Fell Bat on one wound charged into the Archmage who had been left just in charge range. This allowed the Black Knights to move to the edge of the forest with the Archmage in sight - as long as the Fell Bat survived the turn, the Archmage would be caught next turn. The magic phase saw one Invocation get through onto the Fell Bats, a decent roll would seal the Archmage's fate for good... but it healed only one wound to the unit! Meanwhile the Wraiths flanked one of the cavalry units, the scream failing to kill any once again but the Wraiths did kill a couple in combat. The Vampire BSB easily killed the Bolt Thrower crew while the Dragon Princes finished off the Skeletons. But the big fight was my Lord who healed himself for once wound, leapt onto the sinuous neck of the Dragon and impaled the Dragon Mage. The Dragon snapped back, wounding the powerful Vampire, but with Walking Death it was a win for the Vampire Lord- and combined with Aura of Dark Majesty, the Dragon broke!

Turn 5

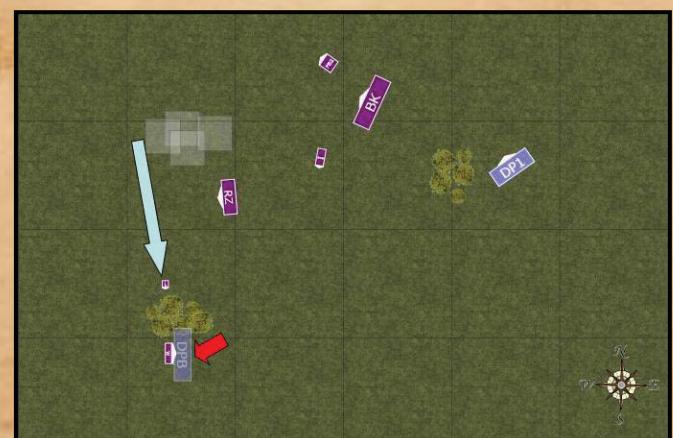


The Dragon was still under the effects of the Vampire Lord's Aura, and fled the battlefield. The Noble and his Princes charged the Zombies and set to killing them, overrunning far, far away. The Archmage managed to drain the magical power from the battlefield, but could not shift the Fell Bat he was fighting against. As the Wraiths finished off the Dragon Princes, it became clear that things had gone drastically wrong for the High Elves.



And so the Black Knights charged the Archmage, the Hell Knight issuing a challenge, and landing a killing blow on the weak Elf before his steed was run down, whilst the Wraiths moved back to the forest to be in range to have wounds healed back by the Vampire Lord who healed himself handily as well while he was at it.

Turn 6



With the northern cavalry having little to do, it was death or glory for the Battle Standard and his Dragon Princes. They charged into the Wraiths but two of their number died to the first successful scream of the game. The Banshee was killed in a challenge but after the Vampiric

Battle Standard had raised some quarter-claiming Zombies, the Vampire Lord read from the Book of Arkhan (Which ran out, not so annoyingly) to bring him close enough to re-raise the screamer - and also affect the Dragon Princes with his Aura of Dark Majesty to boot.

With a quick blow on the dice from a friend from my club to charm them, I rolled a 6-5 for the Banshee's scream on the Dragon Princes, killing them and their Battle Standard Bearer. And that was game- and a 7-3 win!

2262 - 1264 to the Vampire Counts!.

Well, what a game, and what a great way to end a great tournament.

This game started off extremely tough with both my opponent and myself quite sure it was going to be a big win for the High Elves early on. However my Vampire Lord's actions mirrored my own, as in the face of great adversity we both decided we weren't going to lay down and die - holding on and refusing to lose to High Elf Spearmen. The rest of the High Elf army either spent the game hacking through core troops - not unimportant but not crucial - whilst my heavy hitters got into position to claim the game. The final scream of the game not only saved my Wraiths, but also let me claim that quarter and recover my lost standard bearers- on top of the points from the Elven elites.

Still, nice to have some good luck - and the game was mine by that point anyway.

Tournament Wrap-up

This was another powerful performance by my Vampire Counts, however the army style of the "flying circus" was different to any of my Vampires I'd taken to previous tournaments.

I don't think anyone else has tried using an army full of flying characters in this manner before and they worked pretty well but mostly just as support for the real powers of the army to work. Many comp systems just look at armies with flying characters and just assume they must be especially nasty because of the ability

to fly around - but miss precisely how vulnerable this makes them, with each Vampire hero dying early on in at least one game. The power of a dragon is unmistakable though - yes, he may only be toughness 5 and only have a 5+ armour save but you can usually avoid the nastiest enemy firepower, and it's not like T6 and a 3+ armour save would matter against a Great Cannon anyway!

I think my army was rated perhaps a little too softly by the comp system but clearly the weaknesses I'd built in to my army were recognised by the powers that be. Having no Ward Save on my Vampire Lord meant that against most armies, which usually have a fair bit of shooting, I really had to be careful with my Lord - I couldn't just throw him in front of the enemy army without serious risk, which means playing as best as I can. My last opponent even commented how crazy it would be to not put the Wristbands on my Vampire Lord for that 3+ ward save but that's the kind of craziness that makes the army fun, as opposed to a cookie-cutter point-and-click game winner.

The tournament winner was a Tomb King player (The fella who charmed the last dice roll of the tournament of mine, the one that wiped out the High Elf nobility), who struggled through against a Daemon player in the final game - losing slightly, but with scores adjusted due to the comp, ending up victorious overall with the Daemon player close behind.

Lizardmen and Empire armies claimed the third and fourth spots (No prizes for guessing their armies), with my Vampires claiming a nice fifth place. The end score was somewhat amusing as I claimed the second highest amount of victory points overall and went 5-1, with the third place chap only getting 3 wins and 2 draws- but the fact that I happily sacrificed much of my army and had my opponents all get a fair amount of VPs themselves meant my wins were not massive one-sided massacres as often happens with the top-placed players. So all in all, a great tournament, and the Vampires will return to reclaim their seat (just below the top table)!

THE DOOM SEEKER ISSUE 1

Available Now on Issuu.com

<http://issuu.com/thedoomseeker/docs/thedoomseeker1>

The webzine for the Warhammer player who loves armies that GW seems to have forgotten.



ISSUE 2 will be published Mid NOVEMBER.

Please visit our sister forums:

The New Slayer Brotherhood

<http://z8.invisionfree.com/SlayerBrotherhood/index.php?act=site>

Ravening Hordes

<http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/RaveningHordes/>

THE CHILDREN OF MAAT

Written by The Pale Lady

Book 1: A Law Unto Her Own.

Prologue: To Walk Through The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death.

IC -1204

Ushoran snarled, his lips curling back to reveal a set of sharp fangs. They glinted menacingly in the erratic torchlight.

"They could not help themselves! They killed a handful at best - worthless, meaningless mortals, nothing but cattle in the grand scale of things. Why should they suffer so?" He slammed a bejewelled fist onto the ornate table, the twelve goblets jumping.

"They have broken my laws!" Maatmeses heard herself say. "I did not create them at some idle whim. There is a very real reason for their establishment, Lord of Masks." She looked into the vampire's icy gaze, a contest of wills between two undying monsters. He gritted his teeth and stood with a whirl, his back to the table.

"I reiterate, their actions were innocuous. Their victims were nobodies. No one has so much as noticed their absence! The lives of street urchins, and blind beggars, they are expendable - and as numerous as grains of sand in our great desert!" he added pointedly.

"That is far from the point. Had my guards not overheard their conversation, their illegalities would have gone unnoticed. They would have slunk back to Lybaras and continued in their bloodshed unabated." The High Judge licked her dry lips, the moisture soothing. "Who knows what could have happened then? Street urchins and beggars are numerous enough, yes, but what of city guard? Nobility?" She paused. "Grand Vizier, how sit the city's coffers?" Haraksite's gaze flicked skyward as his lips mouthed silent calculation.

"They are up sixty eight percent since my last books," he answered eventually.

"And can we afford war?" said Maatmeses. Haraksite spluttered at the word.

"War? Who is speaking of war?"

"I speak of war, should Lord Ushoran's offspring continue to feast in the kingdoms of the priest kings! They are aggravating an already sore wound. The Nehekharans grow suspicious of us and our practices. They hear whispers of the cult that thrives here, and still, his children," she nodded toward Ushoran, "feed from Lybaras, and Mahrak!"

The Lord of Masks growled, a sound at odds with his otherwise refined appearance. He spun around, a retaliation on his tongue, but another voice spoke out first.

"You will sit, Ushoran."

He checked himself, chest rising and falling slowly. An element of composure returned to his eyes. Bowing, he sank back into his seat, like a whipped dog.

"Of course, my most glorious Queen." The vampire lord coughed, hand before his mouth, the picture of etiquette.

Queen Neferata smiled from atop her throne, her gaze running luxuriously over each of the members of her court. It was a silken gaze that slipped into the soul, subtly penetrating the darkest veils of their minds. From beside her, King Vashanesh sat quietly, back straight, left hand resting atop that of his queen's. When she spoke, her voice rang rich and certain.

"Maatmeses speaks the truth when she says the Nehekharans grow wary. They hear rumours, whispers of our dark lord and unseemly sacrifices carrying the length of the desert to reach their ears. My informants in their courts tell me this, and I hear

the same story, whether from the court of Mahrak, of Lybaras, or of Khemri itself.” She paused, her tongue slipping out to lick the corner of her top lip. “*They hear the name Nagash, and they grow afraid.*” There was something sensuous about the way she said the Great Necromancer’s name, as though it brought her physical pleasure.

“*You do not know that they would have returned, Maatmeses,*” snapped the Lord of Masks, pointlessly reversing the direction of the conversation. “*Lybaras is a great distance to travel, and the other kingdoms even further still. My children have everything they need to slake their thirst here, in our city. In this very temple alone, for Nagash’s sake!*”

“*And yet, something drew them there in the first place. Something lead them into foreign lands, against my explicit rules. For this digression, they need to be reprimanded. It is the law, Lord Ushoran. We cannot be seen to waver it for the nobility.*”

“*None are exempt in the eyes of the law,*” added Captain Abhorash, from beside their dark queen. The table nodded their agreement, bar one. Ushoran’s temper raged unchecked

“*Don’t be so ridiculous. We are exempt. Of course we are! We wrote the laws! We are above them, as we are above mortals.*” Maatmeses struggled to contain herself in the face of such idiocy. Could he not see the potential consequences of what he was saying? The tension across the table was palpable. It tasted sour.

“*Listen to yourself. Law requires all to obey it, else it fails, it unravels, and loses its integrity. You are not so mighty that you can do as you please without consequence, my lord.*” A voice sounded from across the table, seductive and majestic. The High Judge felt ancient eyes settle on her.

“*Am I not above the law, Maatmeses?*” She licked her lips again, and smiled falsely. It was an unattractive expression on an unattractive woman. She looked both sly and awkward under the scrutiny.

“*You are exempt all laws, my Queen Neferata. You are as a goddess, even to us. You come and go as you please about the city, no earthly law could seek to restrain you.*” Neferata pursed her bronzed lips and nodded once, clearly pleased by what she heard. Ushoran grinned.

“*That does not apply to you, however, and especially not your offspring!*” snapped Maatmeses, quicker than she would have liked. She needed to trap the arrogant bastard, to turn his own words against him, before the meeting ran its course.

“*And why not? Why should our glorious queen in death, Neferata herself, be free of the law and yet the rest of us assembled here be denied by it?*” A couple of heads nodded in agreement, as though his words were causing them to reconsider. The High Judge knew Ushoran was slippery. His words could be sweet as honey, or like venom on his barbed tongue.

“*Let his children feed where they please,*” muttered W’soran, half to himself, half to the other masters. “*They will be found out, and Nehekhara will march against us as one. It is not as though they have so much as a chance of victory against the likes of us.*”

“*You have seen this?*” said Neferata curiously.

“*We have seen it before, in Khemri, when our dark lord rose above the masses and sought to wrest control. It will be the same, only the outcome will be different.*”

“*Go on.*”

“*They can not hope to compete with the might of Nagash and Lahmia together! If Nehekhara united against us, he would come to our aid. He is our god! He will fight to protect his disciples, as much as to claim revenge over the men and women that prevented him from attaining the throne of Khemri. These facts are indisputable. His magics will wreak a devastation unseen in all the world yet!*”

“*We do not know for certain that he would directly interfere, even to save us.*”

“*Have faith in the Great Necromancer, he is both cunning and patient. No plot unfolds without his knowledge. Think of all he has achieved already...*”

Maatmeses interjected, seeing the turn of the conversation. At the references to Nagash, an air of anticipation had settled over the assembled vampires, as though they were on the edge of their seats. The Great Necromancer had such an effect on their kind. She could not explain it, but she did not like the influence his name seemed to hold over its vampiric worshippers.

"We cannot simply throw our laws aside, and bank on the dark lord Nagash to save us when Lahmia is assaulted. Better to maintain an attitude of discretion, and avoid war altogether!" This was the fate of Lahmia they were talking about! Could they not see that? Had they become so self-absorbed that nothing was sanctified anymore, even their own city?

"We are all here of the same blood, all equal. If our Queen Neferata is fit to disregard the hand of the law, why should we curtail our behaviour?"

Maatmeses grabbed at the opportunity revealed by the vampire scholar, before anyone else could interject. It occurred to her, as she began to speak, that W'soran was antagonising the situation with his attitude. He is well aware that the queen was above them all, and had rights that they did not. Why was he siding with Ushoran's views? Did he want war? The thought was unsettling.

"But we are not all equal! Our Queen," she paused, adding influence to the title, "surpasses us all in rank, power and divinity. We are gods and goddesses amongst men, yes, but within our own number, Queen Neferata alone has the power necessary to disregard - even rewrite - the laws as she sees fit. You dispute this?"

"This is preposterous!" snapped Ushoran.

A hush settled over the vampires, as quiet as the lifeless deserts of the east. Then, from the head of the table:

"You dispute this, little brother?"

For a moment, Maatmeses thought he might. He opened his mouth to speak, then shut it.

"I do not, my Queen."

"Good. Then it is settled. The seven offending vampires will be punished for their crimes. Such wanton feeding is not to be encouraged beyond our city walls. What are they subject to, High Justice? I forget such things."

"A year's isolation in the Catacombs, my Queen," spoke Maatmeses with a hint of pride. It did not go unnoticed on Ushoran, who grimaced and, leaping to his feet, strode out of the chamber. Shadow rippled across his bronzed torso as he quit their company. "I will see to it that a regiment from the city guard collect them and accompany them to the temple, for the administration of their sentence." The High Justice could feel the knots in her muscles, her neck in particular aching. She had been tense, more so than usual, but she could not help it. The flaunting of her laws was unacceptable in the best of circumstances, but the laws broken in this instance... She was most passionate that they must not be ignored.

They existed for a reason!

"That is everything?" said Ahmose with detectable finality. He cracked the knuckles of his ham-fists. "The docks do not run themselves. I have six barques arriving in less than an hour that need officiating."

"We are all busy," muttered W'soran. "So busy, so much to arrange! Have you seen the Great Library recently? A wealth of information, fit for a god! But such a pain to categorise. Immortality such as ours in a necessity, merely to document the endless collection accumulated there."

"That is all I wished concluded," nodded Maatmeses, "though had Lord Ushoran not contested my arrests so virulently, I would still have called assembly, in light of these most disturbing turns of events." The remaining masters turned her way. "I cannot stress how important it is that you limit your children to the city's boundaries. Rumours have reached my ears that others too have been slipping through the city walls, for what purpose I can only begin to imagine. Do not allow your offspring to feed in foreign lands."

"You have made your point, High Judge, most... incessantly. This meeting is adjourned." Something about Queen Neferata's

languid tone smarted Maatmeses. Let them continue to frequent the city walls then, she thought with bitterness. She had the entirety of the city guard at her disposal. The secrets of their comings and goings would not remain clouded for long.

Chapter 1: A Ruby Shattered.
IC -1200

Dark magic crackled through the air, a hundred bolts of black lightning arcing from the library's entrance into the maelstrom of combat below. Where each bolt struck a man withered and died, his flesh stripped clean from his bones.

The charnel reek of spoiled blood hung heavy on the air, the stench so strong it was palpable. To the desperate soldiers that fought below, it was a bitter taste on their tongues, a reminder of the thousands who had died already, their bodies despoiled. To the dark denizens of the city, the defenders of ancient Lahmia, the smell was a promise, an unspoken promise of the feast that was to come should they win. It stirred their eternal appetites, bringing out the beast within each one of them. Lahmia was a city of vengeful monsters.

The air was saturated with the nauseating stench; it pervaded every corner of the great city. There was no escaping it. The vampires bathed in the rich, intoxicating scent, even as they murdered the invaders of their precious city with their fangs and blades.

More lightning flickered forth from the entrance of the Great Library, the chanting of a coven of vampire priests bringing it to bear on the encroaching soldiers. Scores fell beneath the arcane bolts, their bones collapsing to the cracked flagstones. Gleaming skulls stared vacantly up, their jaws locked in eternal screams.

Still the fighting edged nearer.

For every Nehekharan felled by the sorcery, two more rounded the street corner and threw themselves into the fray. Time lost all meaning, the battle dragging on for what seemed like an eternity. With the sun concealed from view behind dark storm clouds, night and day ran into one another. The clouds rumbled angrily overhead, venting their fury at the bloodshed unfolding below, constantly threatening a storm but never quite relenting.

The vampires of Lahmia revelled in the dark shadows cast by the thick black storm clouds, knowing full well the effect it was having on their enemies. They could smell it, the stench of the mortals' fear. The shadows filled their hearts with despair. Their sun god, Ptra himself, was powerless over this cursed city. How could they possibly hope to triumph? That they still fought on was a testament to the strength of their revulsion toward the vampires and their fell ilk.

The first of the soldiers broke from the bitter fight, charging over the gutted corpse of a Lahmian guard and taking a step up the long flight of steps that lead to the entrance of the Great Library. His heart hammered in his chest. Sweat clung to his flesh in an oily sheen but still he charged. The vampires could not be allowed to live. The servants of Nagash were cruel, greedy and unnatural, and they had no place in the world. They were a pestilent blight upon the fair desert kingdoms!

He made two more steps before a beam of purple light punched through his face.

Mouthless, he died silently.

The perpetrator stepped from out of the ranks of the priestly vampires, his hands upraised. Even as two more soldiers mounted the stairs his hands cast them back, ribbons of obsidian-black light blasting from his fingertips. The light continued, scything through the wizard's enemies, dissecting three whole ranks of warriors through their waists with a neat slash.

There was nothing neat about the chorus of screams that erupted from their mouths, or the contents of their bodies that spilled, ruined, over the library steps. It was no way to die.

The vampire wizard laughed, his voice echoing across the plaza. It was the laugh of the damned. Here was a monster who took true delight in the murder wreaked by his magics.

"Come!" he shrieked, his voice hoarse with the shouting of his incantations. "Come, and die! Feel the touch of my sorcery as

it burns your flesh away and devours your organs! Do you not know who I am? You stand before W'soran, high priest of all Lahmia and devoted servant of the dark lord Nagash! Tremble, tremble and die!" His cacophonous voice rang across the plaza, planting terror in the hearts of all who heard it.

Still more soldiers came.

A hundred similar pictures unfolded the length and breadth of Lahmia. Every street, every clearing, every garden, every building, the armies of Nehekshara fought fiercely against the forces of undeath. They were united; warriors from every corner of the desert realm come together to lend their strength and overthrow the taint of evil that seeped from cursed Lahmia into the desert sands around it. Lahmia, once fair and noble a city, had become infected; a cesspit of vampires, and undead, and evil. Nagash worshippers! It had to be cleansed.

Teeth gritted in determination, the woman brought her curved blades down on the neck of a Khemrian. Bone parted as easily as flesh beneath her unholy strength and the warrior's head flew from his shoulders, a fountain of hot blood spurting from the savage wound. She snarled and kicked his body aside, to join the countless number of dead that lay, festering, around her.

She was a pillar of strength, an embodiment of bitterness. While she stood tall, the clearing would not fall. It would not!

Her chest rising and falling heavily, blood racing through her ancient veins, Maatmeses, high judge of all Lahmia, surveyed her surroundings. Over a hundred corpses covered the cold sand, their blood already congealing into a blanket of sticky red. For a second, the heady scent distracted her, but only for a second. She squashed the feelings of hunger easily aside. If Maatmeses was anything, it was disciplined. She would not surrender to the bloodlust like the bestial gets of her brethren.

Vampires fought on every street corner, their fangs bared, faces transformed into feral visages of beasts. Lion-muzzled vampires snarled their fury as they tore the throats out of their enemies in gluttonous sprays of blood. Others, captains of the city guard, retained their human guise, instead turning their vampiric talents toward dismembering their opponents limb from limb. The Neheksharan warriors, mere mortals, could not hope to challenge the vampires in skill in combat. Their gutted corpses were a morbid testament to the fact.

Maatmeses watched as one vampire, his brow knotted, jaw dislocated like some obscene serpent, sprang from a low rooftop onto an unsuspecting soldier below. The man's screams as the vampire bit his face clean off were drowned by the wet sounds as it fed voraciously. Its teeth savaged his ruined face, eager to reveal as much hot blood as possible. The High Justice spat with revulsion. It was such careless feeding, such wanton bloodshed, that had landed them all in this nightmare! The gluttonous habits of a few had damned their entire city to destruction!

Those careless, ignorant greedy offspring of her compatriots, the spawn of Vashanesh, of Ushoran and of cursed Neferata, were to blame! It was they who had turned their insatiable appetites on the other kingdoms. They had stalked the streets of Numas, Quatar, Lybaras and Mahrak by night, the bloody remains of their dark hunger rousing the first the attention, and then the ire, of the kings there. Their actions were just the spark needed to ignite decades of tension between Lahmia and the other kingdoms. There were other factors, of course. She could not help but be fair when pointing the finger of guilt. It was in her nature, every bit as much as the blood thirst was.

W'soran and his careless actions were as much to blame. He had long been in contact with Nagash, and it had only been a matter of time before one of his emissaries had become waylaid, and captured by the mortals.

Vampires are easy to interrogate, if you only know how, she thought knowingly.

The priest kings had quickly learned from their captives of the undying nobles, and the Cult of Nagash that had established itself in distant Lahmia, and they had grown violent. They hated Nagash, and anything connected to him. His memory was a blight on their lands, a stain on Nehekshara's records. Their fury was at boiling point, and the expansion of the vampires' hunting grounds into their own realms had tipped them over the edge.

The vampire cast back its head, gore smeared about its lips, and tossed the empty carcass aside. Its eyes shone yellow in the relative darkness, and Maatmeses was reminded suddenly of a cat, a capricious, self-absorbed creature, that stalks its prey with malicious intent before killing and feeding off of it with ruthless efficiency. She was not surprised to watch as the vampire murdered another soldier and promptly buried its face in his neck. They were little better than beasts, the youngest

gets, she thought contemptuously, and her fair Lahmia, gemstone of the deserts, was burning for it!

As High Justice, she was more than familiar with vengeance. It was a part of her, it made her who she was. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. That was the way of the world. Her thoughtless kind had brought misery, sorrow and terror to the lands of men, and now the short-lived mortals were bringing their retribution.

Their retribution, she had quickly decided, was far from just. The deaths of a few did not equate to the sacking of Lahmia! This was her city! Her laws had kept it secure and safe and fair, for so long, and now it was crashing down around her and there was nothing her ancient legislature could do to prevent it. It had never failed her before, but against the swords and spears of the Nehekharans, her laws were useless. The beast within her raged at its shackles. Her fists clenched tight.

A cloud of arrows descended from the grey sky toward her. In a matter of seconds, the clearing she stood in would become a killing field. Her few remaining gets and she would become pincushions under the endless flight of arrows that flew true toward them.

Maatmeses' nails lengthened. Her eyes grew dark, and her lips pulled back into a snarl. Words flew from her quick tongue, and the sands at her feet exploded into action. They responded to her will, stirring up into a momentous swirl of movement.

"Rise sands, rise, and conceal us from harm in your storm!" she cried, and the sands did as she commanded, in seconds becoming a vicious sandstorm. It plucked the arrows from the sky and tossed them harmlessly aside, splintered matchwood in the face of Maatmeses' ire.

Across the clearing, the archers snatched more arrows from their satchels and took aim on the vampires once more.

The High Justice of Lahmia concentrated her hatred. She concentrated on the feelings of vengeance, on the unjust nature of the situation. She saw Lahmia burning in her mind's eye, she smelled the ashes, and blood, and fear, and she dwelled on the screams and cries of agony that battered her senses.

She looked at the bodies of her gets, her offspring, her children, those who had been overwhelmed and slain.

No, not slain. Murdered.

She saw the wounds dealt them, the blades that pierced their hearts, each a palace guard, or a judge, one who had not only obeyed her laws but enforced them throughout the city. That had been their role, the duty of her children, and through the actions of others, they had paid the ultimate price. She saw nothing but their broken, battered bodies and Maatmeses, master vampire and high judge of Lahmia, knew a vengeance unlike any she had felt before.

It was not just!

A horrifying roar tore itself from her lips and her undeniable fury bore its way into the weak minds of the archers who had shot at her. They were mortal. Soft. Weak. Their minds crumbled beneath her vampiric fury, the dark gift racing through her tainted blood even as the archers fell screaming to the ground, their minds consumed by nightmarish visions of death and evil. They died with looks of abject horror on their faces.

Maatmeses had never been an attractive woman, even before she had joined the ranks of undeath. Her life had been filled with trials, and it had been a constant struggle rising through the ranks to high judge of the city. It had taken its toll on her figure. Wrinkles festered in the corners of her eyes, and around her mouth. Not even the stark black makeup that traced her eyes, or the bronze touch to her lips could hide it. The angles of her face were off too, making her appear harsh and stern by default. That she had seen much hardship was evident merely from looking at the woman.

Yet in that instant she looked monstrous. As she rent apart the pathetic minds of those who sought to harm her, retribution filling her entire essence, she was visible for the beast that she was. Her lips pulled back to reveal row upon row of razor-sharp fangs, and her face creased under her terrible ire into a mass of wrinkles, brow and cheekbones, but it was her eyes that were most changed. To look into them, in that moment, was to witness a thousand miseries, a thousand wrongs, a thousand pictures of pain and agony and injustice.

The city she had policed and judged and maintained for longer than she cared to remember was falling, and not even the

might of it vampire lords could save it.

A sound like thunder rocked the earth, the very ground shaking with tremors. Maatmeses swung her blade around in a vicious swipe, burying it deep into the chest of a soldier who had strayed too close, before turning her gaze in the direction of the ominous rumbling. Anxiety and disbelief swarmed inside of her. It filled her every muscle.

"It cannot be!" she breathed and, with a glance at her five remaining vampires, raced off toward the source of the sound. If the terrible tremors had come from what she suspected, then all was lost. It was over. The ancient vampire gasped in exasperation.

The root of the blame lay with Neferata. Her and that accursed priest W'soran! The blatant injustice exhibited by the Nehekharans aside, everything stemmed back to the queen and her pet sorcerer. If they had not brought the Cult of Nagash into the court of Lahmia, if they had not infected the fair city with the taint of vampirism, it would still be standing. Before, it had been the jewel of Nehekhara. Its beauty and glory was unparalleled. Kings had travelled the length of the desert, braving the relentless heat of the sun and the multitude of other pitfalls concealed beneath the sands, to witness it. To walk the streets of Lahmia had been a breath-taking experience.

And those two power-hungry daemons had ruined everything. They had unleashed the curse of undeath over the city. They had turned its nobles and high ranking members into their own kind. The vampires' disobedient, worthless gets had fed indiscriminately, venturing into the domains of other kings, and inciting their fury. The Queen and her wretch of a priest should be made to pay for the crimes they had committed.

It was only fair!

They should be made to pay, and yet instead, her Lahmia burns!

Vengeance coursed through the master vampire like a wicked poison. It consumed her, hatred fuelling her feelings of injustice, which in turn fed the hatred she felt, an endless circle of pain. Maatmeses knew she was looking for blame. She was scouring the depths of her memory, of events both recent and long passed, looking for any who might be in some way responsible for the burning buildings around her. She succumbed wholly to the virulent vengeance that flourished within her still, dead heart.

Flames exploded around her as Maatmeses neared the end of the street. Blistering heat washed over her like dragon's breath. The Nehekharans had employed the use of their war machinery, catapults hurling flaming oils and massive boulders into the city.

More missiles crashed into the street, tearing down the house to her left in an eruption of rubble and sand. She hissed and turned, almost running into two soldiers as she did so.

Without breaking stride she thrust her blade out, gutting the first and stepping through his innards even as her free hand snaked out to break the neck of the second. He fell like a puppet with its strings cut.

She barely registered the flicker as their lives died out, or their blood as it spilled wet and hot from their mortal wounds. She had only thoughts for one thing. Please, let it not be, she prayed silently, please. Please. It was the centre of their existence, and had been for decades. Lahmia revolved around it, and the rites they performed there, in the name of Nagash. They consecrated him even as they drank in his name, to slake their dark thirsts.

Reaching the end of the following street, the high judge rounded the corner and froze. In that moment her undead heart broke, and something of the vampire's mind was lost forever.

The Temple of Blood lay in ruins. Nehekharans swarmed over it like ants on a decaying corpse. The ground was strewn the dead, hundreds if not thousands of them, a thick carpet of twitching, bloodied bodies, and in their midst stood Abhorash.

The Lord of Blood fought valiantly, his blade a blur, the last of the temple's guard in a tight regiment around him. He was every inch the commander of Lahmia's armies, but for all of his efforts, it was pointless. They were wasted. For all his limitless strength, his tireless vigour and unmatched skill in combat, he was beaten. Overcome. Doves of Nehekharan warriors stormed past him into the temple proper, even as he slew their comrades. She empathised with the warrior in a way no mortal could ever understand.

Screams and flames alike rose out from the belly of the ancient structure, both soaring high into the sky and signalling the destruction of the vampires' centre of worship. Where was their vengeful god now, she heard herself think. His devoted servants were dead or dying, his temple desecrated by flame and sword and burning oil, and he did nothing. Where once there had been respect and support, she felt only bitter hatred and disappointment toward their god. The Cult of Nagash had flourished to new heights within Lahmia, bearing the city with it, and now, as its vampiric devotees died or fled, Lahmia followed suit.

Tears of blood trickled from Maatmeses' eyes. Her spirit was broken, just as her laws had been, and her city was.

For the first time since she could remember, the master vampire, high judge of Lahmia and head of the city guard, felt powerless. She was a broken woman.

Overhead, the storm clouds broke. Fat jewels of rain poured down over the raging fires and screaming combatants. Vampire battled mortal. Blood ran slick across the cold stone paving. Maatmeses watched all this, unfolding slowly before her, but she did not see it. Her gaze froze, unfocussed.

Her city had fallen. Her city had fallen, and those responsible had long since fled, to save their own monstrous hides. The scholarly guardians of the Great Library lay either dead or dying, centuries of literature and lore little but kindling for the hungry fires that devoured them. The docks were aflame, Ahmose, master vampire and lord of the Lahmian fleet, impaled on a scimitar. A handful of ships fled the city, bearing his few helpless gets. The rest lay still about the docks, fires claiming their unclean bodies. The Lord of Masks and their bitch of a Queen had long since abandoned the city, their own pathetic lives of more import than sacred Lahmia. Even the undead warriors, the skeletons and zombies that had risen at W'soran's word, collapsed under the constant assault of the Nehekharans.

Lahmia was in ruins, a lifeless, blood-encrusted husk of its former self, and there was nothing she could do about it. She had tried her best, and it had not been enough.

Her screams rose over the roaring thunder and carried far across the city.

Chapter 2: A Mind in Turmoil

IC: -1200

"Maatmeses..."

She was going mad.

The vampire stood at the entrance to the cavern in which she and her five offspring were sheltering. Outside the sun shone fiercely, driving the vampires underground, into the cool, dark mouth of a cave. They had taken to resting during the day, hiding in any shelter they could find, and fleeing across the endless desert by night. It was the most sensible way to travel, Maatmeses had quickly reasoned. Daylight was not their friend; it revealed their location to all who cared to look, and the blistering heat was relentless. It baked the very sands beneath their feet, so that the simple task of walking became a torture, the unprotected soles of their feet searing and burning with each step.

Night concealed them. Night hid them from their pursuers. Night offered respite from the boiling sun, and the wicked mirages. The darkness was their only ally, now that all they knew and loved was destroyed.

She heard them sometimes, during the day, when her children slept. They raced across the sands, steeds snorting, whips cracking like lightning. Their pursuit was as relentless as the sun's heat, and equally as intense. Their cries, their laughter, their voices as they chased each other through the shifting deserts, stung at Maatmeses. These were the men who had sacked her homeland. They were directly responsible for the ruination of her city. Their hands dripped red with the blood of her kin.

Their voices mocked her.

It seemed to the High Justice that they haunted her on her arduous trek through the desert. Never quite catching up, but never stopping in their pursuit. They served as a living reminder of the death of her city, and all the pain and suffering that had come hand-in-hand with it. They were the living embodiment of her nightmares. Every time she heard them, a distant shout, their voices muffled by the desert winds and towering dunes, she was brought screaming back to Lahmia. Its burning streets stretched far into her mind. She could see the ruins, the desecrated temples, the ravaged libraries, in her mind's eye. The images of destruction had been burned there for eternity, and all it took was the slightest of reminders to see her reliving the events first-hand.

There was no escaping them.

In her sleep, the nightmares came alive. They crept through her brain, taking the shape of those she had loved and lost, her children who had not survived the onslaught. Vampires she had known for decades - some for centuries - rose from the blood-soaked sands to plead with her. They begged her for vengeance, for retribution. They screamed at her to avenge their deaths.

"You are High Justice!" they would cry, and she knew what they would say, for they haunted her every night. "You of all know the value of retribution! It is a need! A necessity! They owe us their lives for the crimes they committed! An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, High Justice. Mother."

And always, at the back of her mind, that insidious voice, whispering, whispering, whispering.

"Maatmeses..."

She would wake, rivulets of blood trickling from her eyes, sweat glistening on her brow. Every night. Every night. No escape.

The woman turned to watch her surviving offspring as they slumbered. They lay, still as corpses, in the cold, concealing dark. A grey tinge had begun to settle over their olive flesh, an outward sign of the excruciating hunger they all felt, but had not once complained about. She had taught them well. Without law, there was chaos. And without discipline, there was no law. That was the way of things.

Her nightmares were right, of course. The Nehekharans had a blood debt to pay. They had sacked Lahmia simply because of their beliefs. They had heard of the rising of the Cult of Nagash, and they had taken offence.

Violent offence. The evidence was there for all to see; the hollow, burned-out shells of the homes and palaces, the despoiled temples and smashed fountains. Lahmia was a ruby shattered.

The Cult of Nagash, she thought, self-loathing eating away at her insides like a ravenous scarab. They - she - had dedicated decades to his worship. She had not been the most devout of Lahmians, cursed W'soran and his followers had claimed that title, but she had accorded respect to the Great Necromancer. She had felt a kinship of sorts, based on the similar nature of their dark selves.

Yet he had done nothing to save them. Nothing. Not a single act in the defence of his loyal servants. She felt sick at the thought of him, of the hours wasted in his worship. The vampire could feel her fangs growing, her eyes darkening, at the mere mention of his name. Then that whisper, again, like a forked tongue in her ear.

"Maatmeses... Come."

She shifted uncomfortably, as though to shrug off the subtle insinuation, and returned to her previous thoughts.

She owed it to the dead of Lahmia to exact the blood toll herself, and she would make sure not to disappoint them. They had died defending Lahmia, their Lahmia, the city upheld through their laws and their justice.

Their deaths would be avenged, and it would not be pleasant. Far from it. A grin split her face. There was something distinctly reptilian about the expression. Yes, there would be vengeance. It was what she did best. It was what she was born to do, her mortal and her undying births both cumulating in her maintenance of law.

She would have her revenge!

With a last, considerate glance toward her offspring, the vampire stepped out from the soothing shadows of the cave into the sand and sun, her dirtied white robes trailing behind her. She blinked rapidly as her eyes adjusted to the intense light. It was brighter than she remembered, dizzying spots flaring in her vision. She shook her head, clearing it of the nauseating brightness, then set off.

There were others deserving of vengeance. Perhaps more-so than the Nehekharans, she thought, ire already festering inside of her. The vampires were as much to blame for Lahmia's destruction as those who had made it a reality. They might as well have desecrated it themselves, for all their unlawful hunting, their gluttonous, thoughtless feasting.

No, they had desecrated it themselves. They had broken her laws! They had knowingly flaunted the strict guidelines she had so carefully laid out for their kind. They too would have to be punished! The poisonous hatred seeped through Maatmeses, saturating her, twisting her thoughts in dark and violent directions even as her list of deserving victims grew.

She moved quickly across the desert sand, a lonely shadow in a world of light. Where before the vampires had wandered aimlessly, desperately seeking some new shelter to hide them from their pursuers the following day, now the High Justice moved with a purpose. Her nostrils flared and her keen eyes, sore from the sun but sharp as diamond nevertheless, scanned the horizon for sign of her quarry. To the west, the shadows of the mountains loomed.

Her offspring were weak and thirsty. Their stomachs growled to be fed and nourished. The beasts inside needed sating. She knew the consequences of denial. She had seen what happened to those who did not feed, and it was not becoming. The irony of the situation was not lost on the master vampire; blood denial had been a punishment in ancient Lahmia, a means of deterrent, one of the few punishments still feasible on her immortal kind. Those that had broken the most severe of her laws, whether they had personally affronted that soulless queen, or murdered beyond their means, had been locked away in ancient stone sarcophagi, trapped for months, years, sometimes decades, denied the touch of blood to their lips until their undead frames could not take it anymore. Denied the taste of warm, fresh blood on their tongues, and its revitalising energy, their mortal shells had withered and atrophied and their skin had turned ashen, until they had resembled little more than dried out husks. Such was the punishment for disobeying her laws.

And now, if she and her children did not feed soon, they would suffer similar consequences. They, lawful to the end, justice their very motive for existence, falling victim to the same fate she had used to reprimand criminals and murderers. It was a stark truth to the severity of their situation. Maatmeses was at her wit's end, but she would not give up. She would see to it that her children's hunger did not consume them. They would feed tonight.

Her nostrils flared again, the fresh scent of some desert beast carrying on the ghost of a breeze. Eyes narrowing, Maatmeses picked up her pace. She would nourish herself on the blood of the living this night. They all would. They needed to be strong, if they were to ever have their vengeance on those who had torn their world apart.

As she stalked her prey across the desert sands, it came again, sifting through her mind like some distant memory, or remembered dream. Even the glaring sun it seemed could not banish its chill presence.

"Maatmeses..."

Dusk came rapidly. One moment the sun reigned supreme, bathing the desert in her golden light, the next instant she had guttered and died. Within minutes, her radiance had turned a fiery orange, and then a blood red. It was an ominous sight; the eternal dunes rolling out across the horizon, swamped in crimson light as the sun spluttered her last.

Within the sanctity of their cave, the Maatmesin fed. Their High Justice had been there when they had woken, stirred from their sleep by the pull of the rising moons and the cooling of the air. The temperature did not bother them; nothing but the most severe of cold could harm their undead forms, and while the chill became noticeable at night, in contrast to the insufferable heat of day, it was far from uncomfortable.

The vampires gorged themselves on the carcass of an old camel, their fangs sinking hungrily into the dead animal as they sought out every ounce of blood within the beast. Maatmeses could see the desperation in their eyes as they drank, the flickers of relief that waxed and waned as the fresh, rejuvenating blood ran down their throats. It brought her some comfort, to see them feeding so eagerly on the food she had brought them. Ordinarily, they would have catered for her, golden goblets filled to the brim with the blood of criminals - for she would not drink from the innocent. Only those deserving of death, or punishment, or those few who gave themselves willingly, were worthy of draining. She had but to say the word, and an endless supply of blood was hers to enjoy. Thick, thin, sweet, sour, and all of it hot and fresh.

But these were far from ordinary times.

The camel's corpse quivered and shook as the five of them nuzzled their jaws into the hairy flesh. They had been reduced to feeding off beasts, Maatmeses realised with a sinking stomach. The nobility of Lahmia, judges and palace guards, forced to slake their dark hungers on the animals of the wild.

It was fitting, she thought with a flicker of irony. The beast lurked within each and every one of them. A monster, eager to be freed, to run amok and murder and slay and drink until it could not move, it had become so bloated and intoxicated on the lifeblood of the living. It was not that she hated herself. To deny that her vampire nature was a gift would be a lie. She loved the strength it gave her, the speed, the power. She had had all eternity to refine her laws, and see to it that they were adhered to.

And punish those who broke them, she thought bitterly, and it was a genuine loathing of the disobedient, the unruly, the criminal, that weighed constantly on her mind.

Only now she was the chief magistrate of an empty city. Ransacked. Its lifeblood spent, drained away by the ruthless men of Neshkhara.

She was a lost soul, in a world that despised her, simply for what she was.

The other vampires were not so disciplined in their morals, she thought ruefully. Their 'queen' had drank at leisure from only the most beautiful and handsome of her subjects. Such narcissistic criteria were flawed. Neferata cared not for her subjects' innocence, or their willingness. That meant nothing to her. The daemoness had but to turn her will toward her intended victims, and they would fall, idolatrous, to their knees, slaves of the flesh.

They would beg her to tear their throats, and sup of their blood. They would lay, smiling, at her feet, even as they died, their blood drained into goblets and passed around.

Hundreds perished to sustain the fountains of blood that Neferata took such beauty from. Some had been criminals, their souls black and twisted as their hearts, but others were as free of sin as their counterparts were evil. She made no discrimination, and therein laid the wrong. The pang of injustice stabbed Maatmeses' heart.

"High Justice, you must feed, to recuperate your strength," uttered Issa, his mouth bloodied. The master vampire smiled at her son-in-blood, the expression at odds with the hard look of vengeance that had taken up permanent residence in her eyes.

"I have drank my fill already, Issa." She indicated the second camel, a withered sack of bones and flesh that lingered near the cave entrance. Not a drop remained within the now skeletal beast, such had been her prodigious appetite. It had not tasted good.

"Where are we headed?" It was a simple enough question, but Maatmeses was unsure of how to answer. In truth, she was unsure of what the answer actually was. Uncertainty was not something she was familiar with; she suspected that was one of the reasons she had been attracted to law-keeping in the first place, all those decades ago. With the law, you were either right, or you were wrong. There was no middle ground, no grey area.

Her other gets raised their heads at the question, the camel momentarily forgotten.

"North. We keep travelling north. We keep to the spine of the mountains. They offer us plentiful shelter, enough that we can travel the desert by night, and retreat to caves during daylight, to hide out our pursuers, and sleep." Ptoleme piped up, his voice articulate and refined. It soothed Maatmeses a little, to hear it.

"But where are we headed? What is our final destination, High Justice? We cannot live off the blood of desert beasts forever." The judge was right, she knew. The past week had been hellish. It was barely an existence, scratching a living from wandering beasts and fleeing like criminals from the light of day, in case they were seen or followed. They were all six of them forsaken, with nowhere and no-one to turn to.

The thought was like a slow poison, weakening her once indomitable resolve, destroying any certainty of hope. She stood from the rock on which she had perched, turning to watch the ruby-red sun disappear over the horizon. It lit her face, washing over the sun-kissed flesh, the crow's feet at her eyes and the faint remnants of make-up there, that over the weeks had faded from black to near-nothingness.

"Maatmeses... Come."

"When we reach the desert's end, we will enter into the shadow of the World's Edge Mountains. They are tall, and dark, and deep, and between their towering peaks we will find shelter, and respite, for a time at least." Never had she been so uncertain. She felt naked, stripped of her robes, her pendant, her authority. Routine was nonexistent, and she was struggling to cope.

In truth, she was not sure why they even travelled north. She felt a... compulsion. A pull of sorts, leading her away from Lahmia's sun-baked corpse and into the cold, grey of the mountains. It came and went in strength, but she could feel it always, a taint, something inside of her, leading her, guiding her.

And despite her wariness, her voice of caution, she had surrendered to it. She was exhausted, and starving, and her world had been wrenched from beneath her feet. Everything was different now. Her allies had abandoned her. The pangs of pain that had wracked her body at the deaths of her gets still stabbed at her in her sleep. Nightmares followed her into the sun, playing out ceaselessly behind her eyes.

She welcomed the tug on her soul that drew her north, because it gave her a direction. That, and vengeance, were all she had now.

Behind her, all was silent. She had the full attention of her children, each digesting the information she had just revealed and turning it over in his or her head. After a moment, a solitary voice spoke up, giving words to the thoughts that occupied each and every vampire present's minds. Maatmeses flushed with pride at the cold truth of what she heard.

"We will need our vengeance, High Justice. Too many have wronged us, and our people."

"And our homes," said Ptoseme.

"And our honour," added Odji.

Maatmeses turned to face her children, her children of justice and retribution, and she saw it reflected in each of their eyes, in the turn of their lips, the shine of their cheeks and the fresh blood on their teeth.

"We will have our vengeance, my children. We will have our vengeance for Lahmia, that I promise you."

As her gets returned to their feeding, the master vampire heard it again, the faintest of whispers at the back of her mind.

"Maatmeses... You are so close." The words slithered into her consciousness, this time accompanied by the shadowy image of a man. He flickered before her eyes, faster than a lizard's tongue, but she recognised him instantly, for she had seen him depicted before, a thousand times over.

As the sun spat its last before surrendering to night, Maatmeses smiled, and never had a smile said more.

Chapter 3: Blessed Basth

IC: -1200

The husky purr of a dozen cats filled the chamber, pleasure resonating from wall to wall. The animals lounged on silken divans while a pair of acolytes placated them with pieces of perch, freshly caught that morning from the River Vitae. The reek of fish was overpowering, but the two men made no sign of noticing it. They had performed this duty countless times before, and would do so for many years to come. Eternity no less, such was the role that the liche priests fulfilled. They would enter this shrine every morning and maintain its sanctity, and that of its feline guardians, until their skin was like sandpaper, and their living corpses withered husks of their former selves. This was the fate of the liche priests.

The cats' throats rumbled with contentment.

The large golden doors to the chamber swung open, and a third figure strode in. He approached the two priests, treading carefully around a trio of cats that had skittered over to rub against his legs. He smiled, enjoying the obvious blessing of Basth. The goddess' favour was prevalent amongst the priests of her temple. She watched over them all and protected them, shrouding them from the attentions of evil.

Gently ushering the attentive animals aside, he came to a stop behind the two acolytes. Their ceremonial robes matched his own, except that they lacked the multitude of golden adornments that hung from his wrists and delicately around his neck. The bracelets and necklaces glittered gold in the warmth of the temple sconces, cat faces emblazoned on the small circlets. It was clear just from comparing the newcomer's attire to those of the two priests that he was their superior. As though to reinforce the thought, they turned and bowed reverentially.

"Greetings Enkhil, Adhe."

"Greetings, Nebankh. What brings you to our sanctum this morning?" The liche priest smiled.

"I come only to immerse myself in the presence of the favoured creations of our most beneficiary and beautiful of goddesses," he intoned, indicating the small army of cats that lounged about the chamber. Their musky scent mingled with the sweet-smelling incenses that smouldered in silver bowls on the temple floor. "I seek her guidance."

"Something troubles you?" It was a rather ignorant question, thought Nebankh, considering the recent troubles that had accosted all of Nehekara. The plague of undeath had resurfaced, and it had taken the combined might of all the kingdoms to quell it. They had triumphed, of course, as had been foretold by the goddess Basth. The vile abominations had burned as readily as papyrus, their magics unable to contest with the arcane protection offered by their goddess. Those that had not died had fled like the beasts they were, scattering into the desert to die a slow and painful death, baked under the intolerable heat of Ptra's sun chariot.

If they were not caught and killed first.

Despite their overwhelming victory over the repugnant cultists of Nagash, he remained uneasy. There had been no respite from the horror of ancient Lahmia, for no sooner had he and his contingent of priests quit the place, to return to the tending of their most sacred temple here, Basth had visited him in his dreams.

"No, no, nothing of the sort. I only seek to saturate my body with the blessed aura of our goddess, and attain inner calm. I have not been sleeping well, and am tired. Basth will restore me." The acolytes nodded knowingly.

"Of course. Basth will heal your ailments. She rejuvenates all things worthy of her touch." Nebankh smiled reassuringly. The goddess had appeared to him while he slept, a cloud-grey Mau, noble and surpassing any cat he had seen before in health and beauty. It was a radiant creature, whiskers near invisible, golden eyes flecked with bronze and green. They had peered languidly into his soul, as though idly seeking her disciple's understanding. Mau-Basth had not been disappointed.

He saw the images she had eased into his mind. Rank upon rank of walking dead, armies of creaking bone, rusted armour and humourless grins. The grin of the long-dead. Then had come storm clouds, thick, tumultuous waves of them, turning day into night and hope to despair. His thoughts had writhed with confusions. How was this possible? The cursed blood-drinkers were dead, or else fleeing and lost. Easy prey for the chariots and horsemen that pursued them. The Mau's eyes flashed in answer, a single, solitary image searing into his mind with corruptible force. His flesh had crawled as he had understood what he was seeing, as though trying to escape the vicinity of the vision.

Nagashizzar, he had heard in his ears. Nagash.

"I would be alone with the servants of Basth for some time, if you would let me," said Nebankh, his voice ringing with politeness. The priests had no right to deny him, but it did not hurt to ask. They bowed, before turning to leave.

"Indeed. We have finished out duties here; the cats of Basth are satisfied. I hope you reach the peace you seek, Priest Nebankh." He bowed as they left, waiting for the ornate gold doors to thud shut before stepping over and sitting beside one of the cats on the nearest divan. It was unbelievably comfortable, made of the finest silk in all Nehekara. The other sanctums of the Temple of Basth were similarly furnished; the cat goddess deserved no less luxury.

He had taken his vision to their High Priestess the second he had woken. There was little the revered woman could do, so far from their temple home, but she had needed to know the stark truth revealed in Basth's dream. Their goddess had blessed

him, Nebankh, with this foresight, and he would not disrespect her by keeping it from his colleagues.

Istnofret was the epitome of their goddess. Majestic, reserved, contemplative, and insightful, she alone was worthy of Basth's undivided favour.

It helped that she was the most beautiful woman Nebankh had ever seen.

He ran a hand down the spine of the cat to his left, the creature rolling in response to his warm touch. It looked up at him through amber eyes, knowing, curious. There was a mystery that surrounded cats, he thought, as he stared into those pools of honey. He marvelled how capricious they were; they could slip from a lightly dozing beast into a quick and savage killer in a matter of moments. The odd desert rat that ventured stupidly into their temple was brutal evidence of this.

Their goddess was no different. To those she loved and cared for, she was an emphatic, nurturing force, who sought only to protect them from their enemies. To those same enemies however, she was ruthless and cold and deadly. He tickled the cat once more, then shifted, his elbows on his knees, head resting in his hands.

Of course, the High Priestess had known of the vision already. He had been fool to believe Basth would grant him a vision, but not Istnofret, her own high priestess. She had been as troubled as he by the grotesque revelation. Lahmia had been purged, but the vein of undeath apparently ran deeper. Nagash it seemed not only lived, somewhere in the ancient bones of the mountains, but thrived there, growing stronger. It would not be long before their nightmares were realised once more. The fell grip of the undead would spread, as was its nature, claiming the lives of everything it touched and turning them against those they loved and had fought to protect. That was the ultimate horror of the undead armies, it was from that aspect that they drew their strength, their power. That, and the very concept of the walking dead, which was so abhorrent to the men and women of Nehekhara.

He had been there, when cursed Lahmia had fallen. The Legion of Basth had strode the streets of the now ruined city alongside the priest king of Mahrak and his own bodyguard. The resolute warriors of that noble city had cut down the undead and their servants with golden scimitars, even as Istnofret and her acolytes - Nebankh included - invoked the blessings of Basth and shielded them from the corrosive magics that the fell monsters employed.

He could remember it all as clearly as if it was yesterday. The poisonous quality of the air, the bitter taste on his tongue, the clash as blade met blade and the wet smack of butchered flesh. He did not think that he would ever be able to forget it.

The priest shuddered.

They had swept through the city, entering in the second wave because of the resilient nature of their dual forces. There was little resistance. All those that they encountered died, or fled, victims to the cold weaponry of the king of Mahrak's bodyguard. They had systematically burned the bodies of the dead as they advanced through the city, be they the crumbling corpses of the blood-drinkers, or the broken bodies of their own men. The fires cleansed their flesh and freed their souls, and ensured there was nothing left to respond to the devilish magic of their priests.

Some of the Lahmians had fought back. Every few streets they would encounter pockets of resistance, small bands of the blood-drinkers, their chins bloody with feasting, ensorcelled blades in their dead hands. There had been lots around the first two plazas, and a great retinue of the Nagash-worshippers had guarded the library. A smaller group had sought to defend the Lahmians' centre of law, and nearly every shrine to their dark, treasonous god had also been protected.

None had withstood the combined might of Basth and Mahrak, their unclean bodies purged with fire and blade, and it had only been a matter of time before they had reached the vampires' unholy temple.

It had burned, just like any other temple. Blasphemy, it seemed, was most flammable.

Something rubbed against his back, soft and warm and smooth, and Nebankh turned in time to see one of the cats slip through the gap by his elbow and onto his lap. It curled up there, depositing itself comfortably under his watchful gaze. In seconds the creature was asleep.

Istnofret had dispatched her fastest, most loyal priests to Khemri, bringing news of the terrible tidings that had filled her dreams. They had done what they could to spread word of the imminent threat. Bast did not lie, and her vision had been as clear as a Nehekharan day. The undead were coming. Maybe now, maybe in a year, maybe in ten. But they were coming, and by all the gods of Nehekhsara, by blessed Bast herself, they will want their revenge.

The fortress loomed over Maatmeses, foreboding, its gates carved out of the very rock of the mountains themselves. Towers jutted claw-like from its rigid heights, their shadow reaching out as though to grasp the lands of men and crush them. The stench was repugnant, even to hers; a mixture of rotten flesh, riddled with plague, and the bitter tang of something acidic. She could feel it corroding her spirit, gnawing away at it bit by bit, a malevolent hunger about the very air itself. The erratic screams that stabbed the gloom outside did little to diminish the feeling.

Then she was flying, soaring over the landscape as though running a thousand times her fastest pace. Gargoyles reared up before her, giant monstrosities of bone, rock and metal that guarded the fortress gates. Their fanged jaws locked in eternal grimace, the stone daemons roared as she passed. The ferocious sound shook Maatmeses to her core. Never had she seen such terrible constructs before. They reminded her of the old temple Ushabti that used to guard the palace in Lahmia, but these gargantuan beasts made them look like fragile puppets in comparison. It was impossible to imagine the damage they could wreak were they brought to life, animated by the dark magics that gathered here. They were living stone vessels of destruction, and their eyes shone with malevolence, dormant - but only just.

Then she was passed them, gone, descended into a winding warren of horror and madness. Undead creatures loped through roughly-hewn corridors, blood fresh at their rubbery lips. Others shambled painstakingly in their wake, the dead flesh of their feet scuffing the ground, or stood propped up at doorways, their loose skin green with infection. Hollow eye sockets flared with witch-flame and grievous moans escaped their crumbling windpipes as she swept passed, faster and faster, the labyrinthine maze of tunnels and passages winding their way through her consciousness. The haunting nightmares of ghastly spirits sank their chill claws into her mind. These were the servants of the master of the fortress: the zombies and ghouls and spectres that served him, bound to his unimaginable will as hounds on a leash.

Suddenly she stopped. Nausea welled up inside of her, and the vampire felt the overwhelming urge to vomit her latest meal onto the cold hard of the ground. Her gorge rose dangerously and she gagged.

He sat atop his throne, ancient and calculating as only a god can be. Balefires flickered in his gaze, unblinking, unflinching, an omniscient grin spread over his withered face. She felt herself tremble in the Great Necromancer's presence. Whether it was the wicked eyes of the monstrous god, or the crackling of the death blade by his side, she could not tell. She felt immobilised by the cloying aura of death that enveloped the dark lord. It was like standing in a pool of tar. This was what true terror felt like, she realised.

"Maatmeses... My Maatmeses. You have been my loyal servant for many, many decades." She felt herself nod. She could not fight it, his voice was like velvet. Old, dusty velvet, cob-webbed with disuse, but smooth all the same. "Your beloved city has fallen, and you are a broken woman. I can feel it in your veins, in your mind, in your very essence. You are changed from the Maatmeses that I watched as she ruled the courts of Lahmia. But I can help you." Here was one who could end her life at the slightest of whims. Maybe the only being in all Nehekhsara with the strength to do so, so strong were she and her fellow master vampires. She struggled to concentrate, the Great Necromancer's figure swaying in and out of focus.

"I know you lust for vengeance against the Nefekharans. They are pathetic. Ignorant, weak, mortal. Their ignorance bred fear, and that fear bred action, and now you are homeless and alone." Her heart swelled painfully even as she felt herself falling. "But you are not so alone as you think, Maatmeses. You have me."

Beams of sunlight blasted through Nagash, his throne, and the thick shadows that clung like bats to his overbearing form. The vampire's jaw gaped with shock, her ivory fangs exposed. Other figures began to appear, hazy and insubstantial. One seemed to step through Nagash himself as it approached her. It reached out to touch her, even as her lord spoke again.

"Come, Maatmeses, my servant. I bid you come and as my servant, my lieutenant, you and your brethren can claim back ruined Lahmia, and the deserts will be thick with the corpses of the Nefekharans!"

"High Justice? Maatmeses, are you alright?" Issa stood in front of her, a hand on her shoulder. It was icy, his grip hard as stone, and he looked at her through eyes laced with concern. She shook her head, regaining her surroundings. Overhead the desert sun shone fiercely down.

"I am fine, Issa." Then, with more certainty: "We will all be fine. I know now where we must go, and what we must do." He gave her a puzzled look. The man must think she had gone insane.

"Our dark lord has not forgotten us. He is waiting, in the bowels of Nagashizzar, for our arrival. In his hands I place our lives, for the Great Necromancer knows all things. He will know what is best for us, and where our future lies." At the mention of the cult's undead god, Issa gasped, his eyes clouding with a mixture of fear and respect. Doubtless he could feel his touch too. They all could, although all but the wisest would not recognise it for what it was. Nagash was a part of each of them, guiding them, encouraging them, nurturing them. He was with them always, she realised that now. The revelation seemed so obvious to her, as though she had always known it.

Maatmeses did not know why she placed such trust in the Great Necromancer. Nagash had forsaken them when Lahmia fell. His most devoted servants, his priestly disciples and immortal cultists, had been cursed and burned and slain and still he had been nowhere to be found. She fought to understand the conflict of opinion that waged inside of her. Something quelled her bitterness, drowning it out under a wave of subservience. Perhaps it was fear, or awe, or the belief that with Nagash's aid Lahmia could once more shine, restored, the gem of the desert. A sly grin split her features in two.

They were going home

Chapter 4: Bloodied Sands, Bloodied Hands

IC: -1200

The charioteers had tracked them to the ruins of an ancient temple. The vampires heard them long before they saw them, their shouts of triumph like death knells in their ears. Maatmeses sprang atop a collapsed ruin, her aged appearance bellying the lithe grace that flooded her limbs. Gold glinted on the horizon as the rising sun winked treacherously at her from the adornments and framework of the approaching chariots. The High Justice wore an expression of solemnity, but inside her emotions raged. Here was her chance for justice. Here it began. She would wreak a terrible reckoning for the damages that were owed her and her children! Blood would stain the warming sands this morning, and it would not be hers.

The blood debt would be paid!

The old Maatmeses might have kept her dignity. Her discipline was enough that she might have kept her wits about her. She knew that vengeance was about to be waged, and that would have been enough to placate her tainted soul.

Instead, she raised her head, eyes glaring up at the sun, and screamed her fury at the clear blue sky. Her voice broke, the

sound becoming as much a howl as it was a human shout. Something in Maatmeses had died with Lahmia. Some piece of her had fractured off, lost forever. She had been irrevocably damaged, her mind as ruined as the Temple of Blood, as unbroken as her laws that had been so carelessly flaunted.

Her face, whether from malnourishment, or something deeper and darker, had never looked more angular. Her brow, her cheekbones, her jaw, they were all slightly askew. Like some monstrous crocodile, she bared a grin and vented her undeniable anger at the encroaching enemy.

All she knew was vengeance.

Below her, dotted around the crumbling ruins of the nameless temple, her children mirrored their mother's stance. It was as though her primal roar had unlocked something in each of them. They felt her pain. Their minds filled with images of injustice and wrongs, the wrongs that had befallen each of them. They saw their friends and family, lying murdered in the streets of Lahmia. The pain of wounds long healed resurfaced, flaring up inside their bones and stabbing at their organs. Their eyes radiated agony as they remembered crimes long since passed and drew on them, their sense of justice bringing out the furious fight in each.

The Maatmesin drew wickedly curved blades from their robes and took up positions, Odji scrabbling lizard-like atop a pillar in the manner of the High Justice herself, the other four fanning out into the ruins. The chariots could not reach them here. The uneven ruins would tear their frames to kindling if they dared to enter the rocky terrain, meaning the Nehekharans would have to dismount and bring the fight on foot. The vampires could not have hoped for better surroundings in which to defend themselves.

Maatmeses watched as the chariots raced nearer. She could make out individual figures now, noticing immediately the heraldry of Khemri. It fuelled the furnace of her hatred. Her hands clenched and unclenched as the beast within threatened to spill out in all its deadly glory. Overhead, grey wisps of cloud began to coagulate. They were nothing; a pale smear in a sea of blue, but they were there nonetheless.

"They destroyed our Lahmia!" she chanted, her children attentive. "They burned our homes, and trampled our scriptures! Our courtroom they ravaged with their war machines, its hollow, burned out remains all that is left of our centre of law!" The Maatmesin frowned, then snarled, hatred edging progressively over their expressions. The disciplined vampires were working themselves up, every wrong, every affront to their sense of justice inciting their anger, their bloodlust, their power.

"Yes, Maatmeses, yes... Remember."

"They dismembered Eshe as she fought to guard our office. They torched our scrolls, flames licking at the papyrus commandments even as their blades removed her arms." Her voice began to break again. "They made her watch - watch - as her life's work went up in fire!" A calm had settled over the Maatmesin. The vampires seemed entranced, their eyes glazed, a cold hatred enveloping them as Maatmeses projected images of their sister's torturous death into their minds.

"Gehb died protecting the Fountain of Basth. They came with spears and priests, cursing him, wracking his muscles with agonising pain and paralysing him so that he could not evade the spear points of the soldiers. His heart was spit like that of some wild beast, before they ransacked the ancient monument he had guarded." She went on, listing the names of every one of her children lost in the fall of Lahmia and each of the fell circumstances surrounding their demises. She commemorated their deaths even as she drew strength from them.

Anger.

"Hatred..." She could barely distinguish between his thoughts and her own anymore. He had become a part of her, she

realised. She hated them. He hated them. Together, their hatred was doubled.

Dark grey smudges flourished in the dawn sky.

The chariots were within bowshot. There were nine of them, rolling three in a row over the last mighty dune before careering down toward the ruins. They were typical of Nehekharan design; the wood used for the yoke and chassis ensured the finished construct was as light as possible, and two slight desert steeds pulled each. The insignia of Khemri was stamped clearly on them, marking them out as property of the capital: golden strips adorned the sides, and their banners, bearing the heraldry of The Living City, fluttered and snapped in the wind.

The High Justice finished her rites and scooped a handful of rubble from the cracked pillar on which she crouched. Lifting her hand to her lips, she locked gazes with one of the charioteers and, eyes flashing lizard-like, breathed vampiric breath over the rocky dust.

"I have witnessed my own nightmares firsthand," she said, her voice like stone. "I have seen them and I have felt their pain. I have watched my beloved homeland fall. Now feel your own nightmares, mortal, as they engulf you."

Almost immediately the man at the reins screamed and clutched at his face. The soldier who rode with him shouted out and clutched frantically at the reins, desperate to keep control of the charging horses as they raced down the dune. His bewitched comrade saw nothing but the thousands of bloated plague flies as they swarmed around him, nipping, biting, stinging, infecting his flesh with sickness and malignant disease. He screamed again, his eyes rolling back into his head, and tore at his clothes and armour.

Maatmeses watched, her ancient eyes proud. Deserving.

His clothes removed, the man did not stop. Swatting desperately at the imaginary flies, he continued to pull and rip, fingers digging into his own flesh in an effort to tear off the infected skin. It came away in thick, fatty strips.

Bloodied and hysterical he toppled from the chariot, dragging his passenger with him.

The High Justice felt something welling up inside of her and before she could stop herself a coarse laugh burst from her throat. This was justice. This was vengeance! She felt the same kind of satisfaction that she had done in her court, when condemning those who had broken her laws. It was a strange feeling, but one she was long accustomed to. A pleasant sensation, of right being enforced, but mixed with a macabre glee, some part of her relishing the look of the condemned as they learned of their fate. It had been there ever since she could remember, lurking, a darkness to her soul that fed off the misery and despair of criminals, and her enemies.

She watched the mortal, not fifty feet from her, as he convulsed in the sand and ripped at handfuls of his skin, overwhelmed by visions of his darkest nightmares.

He had got what he deserved.

The remaining eight chariots turned and slowed, cutting a semi-circle around the deserted temple, before disgorging their Nehekharan drivers onto the gritty sand. The master vampire watched them as the sixteen Khemrian spearmen advanced on the ruins and their undead quarry. Their faces were grim. Hard. She knew what they were thinking, for she had heard it said a thousand times before. The vampires were unnatural. They should be long dead, buried beneath the sands, or better still burned to ashes and scattered to the capricious desert winds, bones and all. They would murder her children, if they could, and reduce them to dust. Their weapons glinted maliciously in the fading light, silently promising pain to her last few gets.

But they had underestimated their prey. That much was obvious from the meagre handful of soldiers sent to dispatch them. These were not the mindless beasts that had bloodied the streets of Lahmia, or hunted thoughtlessly in their cities. These were her strongest. Her first. Her fastest, most disciplined and deadly. Her own blood pumped thick and powerful in their veins.

The mortals had made a grave mistake in coming here.

The desert light seemed to waver as the soldiers entered the ruins. The stench of undeath hung about the air like a thick cloud, clinging to the broken pillars and cracked stone stairways. It was revolting, the soldiers' faces twisting into grimaces. The vile taint was more than a smell. It was a sickness, that seemed to infiltrate their very bones, and unsettle their stomachs.

Calm descended over the ruins as the spearmen quietly advanced on the stationary vampires. In seconds they would be upon them, spears stabbing, blood spilling, screams sounding.

Then they sprang.

The five gets leapt into action. They span and ducked, dodging hasty spear thrusts and emerging easily within the spearmen's reach. They had lost the advantage their long weapons had at distance. The spears were of little use in such close quarters.

The first vampire, Ptoleme, snarled and lashed out, his palms crashing on either side of a soldier's head. The man tried to duck, to avoid the killing blow, but he was much too slow. His head burst like a ripe fruit under Ptoleme's unholy strength, shards of bone piercing the vampire's hands. He licked his lips, the rich aroma of blood threatening to drown him. It had been so long since had tasted the blood of men!

Maatmeses' firstborn fed like a beast at a watering hole, drinking deep and fast, eyes locked warily on the other soldiers. Camels and desert rats were no comparison to the sweet, succulent blood that filled his mouth now. He shuddered bodily.

Beside him Issa swept forward, his mouth bristling with long, sharp fangs. Mortal in appearance, his vampiric essence betrayed itself through his gnashing teeth and snake-like eyes. He dodged a clumsy spear stab and leapt onto the culprit, knocking him tumbling to the sand. The man struggled, but it was futile. The vampire's strength far outmatched his own. Ancient eyes bored deep into those of the mortal. They hinted at an anguish and suffering far beyond the man's years.

"For Eshe," he hissed vehemently, "for Lahmia!" Teeth flashed, flesh parted, and hot blood spurted violently out from where moments before the man's jugular had been. His screams rose to a high crescendo then abruptly stopped.

Maatmeses watched as below her children exacted a vicious toll on the spearmen. They were taking what was theirs by right. The spearmen's lives were forfeit, that was the way of the world. They belonged to her. They belonged to her children. They belong to the dead that filled the streets of once glorious Lahmia.

"Kill them!" she screamed, all decorum lost in the wild and the heat and the endless dunes of the desert. "Kill them all, it is no less than they deserve!" Her visage monstrous, Maatmeses herself descended into the bloody fray.

Cold fear settled over the mortals. She could smell it, rising like the heat. They knew they were dead. She felt no sympathy for them. They were men, there was no way they could hope to stand against the preternatural strength and speed of her children and she, especially roused and vengeful as they were. Justice glittered in each of the vampires' eyes. They were fulfilling a duty, to Lahmia and to Maatmeses herself, as much as they were fighting for survival.

Shadows festered in the hidden corners of the ruins, lengthening and spreading a clammy chill about the air. It touched the hearts of the few surviving men, quelling any hope and feeding the dark terror that took root there. They knew their dooms were at most minutes away. In a matter of heartbeats, their souls would be in the shadowy realm of Usirian, his alone to judge. Maatmeses ensured they all knew this, focusing her will, impressing it on the weak minds of the mortals. She clouded them with images of their eternal souls trapped in a hellish underworld, Usirian's monstrous servants forever devouring them, even as her golden khopesh slipped through the air. The sickles tore through skin, muscle and bone indiscriminately.

She was rewarded in her efforts by a chorus of despondent groans, rising ghost-like from the swirling melee.

Thunder rumbled angrily through the now thick storm clouds, the elements themselves demanding payment for the fall of Lahmia.

In minutes it was all over. The soldiers had been no match for the vampires, their brittle bones and soft flesh were no contest against the righteous strength of the undead monsters, with their steely grips and iron-hard claws.

Blood covered the ground in crimson puddles, staining the ancient temple stone, slick and shiny. Maatmeses marvelled at the ruined bodies left in their wake, as though seeing far more than the still warm corpses on the sand. She looked at the blood spilled, smelled the iron tang as it enveloped her, saw the broken necks, the dismembered limbs and headless corpses and one word sang in her head, drowned out her ears and sat, delicious, on her tongue, more nourishing than any blood.

Vengeance.

"It embodies you."

"Feed, my children, drain their corpses until there their veins run dry. Their blood is owed us!" Her ravenous gets needed little encouragement, collapsing on the ruined bodies of the Nehekharans, their claws busy as they plucked at hearts and sundered flesh.

The skirmish marked the start of her retribution, and the retribution of her children. The few slain here were a landmark, the very start of her feud. More wandered the desert sands, and cowered in their cities, deserving of justice. Their black hearts festered with guilt and responsibility.

She would make it her duty to exact their toll. In time, they would be hers.

The overcast weather followed the vampires as they headed north, although in truth it had more to do with the encroaching mountains than any supernatural influence. Days rolled into weeks, with nothing but night and day to separate them out. It was an inane journey. The monotony of the desert dunes threatened to drive the vampires insane, and they took to commemorating the dead, to renew their memories, and to pass the time. These elegies were not the fury-filled incantations that Maatmeses had used at the ruins to incite her brethren into bloodthirsty righteousness, but sorrowful accounts of their lost colleagues' lives. They praised the dedication of the Maatmesin, who had all held positions within the Lahmian court of law, or captained over garrisons in the city guard. They had been loyal unto the end, fighting with their dying breath to defend that which they had fought to uphold in life, and they had been undeserving of the ravaging torches of the Nehekharans.

It was with heavy hearts that the Maatmesin made their way through the last stretch of desert and into the mountain passes that bordered the Straits of Stars.

The sun had seemed slow to rise this morning, although Maatmeses knew that it was no more than a trickery of the mountains. They stood imposingly off to the vampires' west, and ensured the passes that wormed their way in their midst

were trapped in a constant cool that, even long after night had passed, never quite faded. Maatmeses welcomed the colder air, relishing the change it made from the insufferable heat of the desert. Every day that they progressed into the mountains was a day's escape from the damned place. She had seen enough hardships in that desert, both physical and mental, to last her a lifetime, and was glad to be free of its torment, at least until she could return under better circumstances.

A savage caw shattered the otherwise calm and the ancient vampire raised her eyes. She quickly spied the source of the sound: a lonely bird circled high overhead, tracing a large, slow circle above their heads. It was doubtless some raven, vulture or other carrion bird, that had decided they were not long for this world. She smirked at the thought. If it intended to wait until they dropped dead in this desolation, it was going to be most disappointed. The last place they were going was Usirian's shadowy Underworld. She had been freed from that fate the instant she touched Neferata's elixir to her lips, and the gift of immortality ran ripe in the blood of her offspring. Her blood. The blood of the Maatmesin.

It would take more than the desert to end her existence now. So much more.

Maatmeses grunted, a hand darting instinctively to her heart. She could feel the pull inside of her growing stronger with every passing day, luring her deeper and deeper into the mountains, away from the desolate deserts of the east. It could not be long before they arrived at Nagashizzar.

She did not think that she could resist the Great Necromancer's call anymore, even if she tried. It was inconsequential, of course. She wanted to follow. She wanted to reach Nagashizzar and be welcomed by their dark lord into his fortress. There she and her children would be safe! They could rest, and regain their strength and stature.

From within the confines of those insurmountable walls, they could plot their vengeance on the pathetic Nehekiarans.

And Nagash would help them.

With the Great Necromancer by their side, retribution was assured. The priest kings could barely rid themselves of him when he had been but a renegade priest. Now, within the sanctity of his fortress, he was untouchable. His deathly magics, the likes of which could strip flesh from bone at but a word, would slay all before him. None would be able to resist. He was as a god! With Nagash guiding them, helping them, aiding them in their vengeance, they could not fail! Hope flared like a dark star in her heart, filling her limbs with renewed vigour.

There would be others too, she realised, as she stared absent-mindedly along the gravelly path they trod. Bits of stone and sand mingled together, proof if any that they were leaving the deserts and transgressing into the World's Edge Mountains.

They could not have been the only vampires to escape the fall of Lahmia. Her curiosity piqued by the sudden realisation, Maatmeses scoured her memory for any indication of who else could have survived. It was not hard; the memories were still raw in her mind. She doubted she would ever forget the last fateful days of the siege.

Ahmose. Strong, mighty Ahmose. He had been slain, she was sure of it. The Dockmaster had been killed by a regiment from Zandri. She could remember the shout go up as clearly as if she heard it now. The master vampire had epitomised everything that it was to be a man; he had been muscular, and tireless, and his eyes had radiated courage the likes of which even the bravest mortal could not hope to match. The watery blood that filled their veins was dilute with generations of cowardice.

The Dockmaster had also been arrogant, brawly, crude and chauvinistic, resenting the queen for the grip she had over the city, and their cult. He had held no place in Maatmeses' heart.

Then there was Abhorash. He had been there when the Temple of Blood itself had fallen. Maatmeses reached across and pulled at her once white robe, slipping it securely over her shoulder. The warrior had earned her respect; they had held similar

values in life, values that had only been reinforced by their ascension into the ranks of the undead, and unlike brutish Ahmose, they had seen a lot of each other. He, supreme commander of the Lahmian armies, and she, High Justice and captain of the city guard, their business about the city had often intertwined. Together, they had shed crimson tears when the Temple of Blood had fallen.

Abhorash had defended it as best he could, the centre of their cult, just like he had sworn to do, but the Nehekharans were too many. His martial prowess had been drowned in a sea of mindless mortals. Demoralised and forlorn, he must have slipped away after its destruction. She hoped he had slipped away after its destruction. Maatmeses had been focused entirely on the ruins of the temple at the time, and while she was loathe to believe one of Abhorash's nobility and strength might have been slain by the Nehekharans, she could not be sure.

Then there was cursed Neferata. Her handmaidens and she had fled long ago, before the armies of the Land of the Great River had even reached Lahmia's gates. Maatmeses fought the urge to spit her contempt for the vile woman. This had been her fault, and yet she had washed her hands completely of the sacking of her city. It was pathetic, a disgrace worthy of the mortals. That fool W'soran had not stayed long either. Once his precious library had fallen, he had made his escape. She had seen him and a small retinue of priests as they fought their way clear, his magic slaying all who stood against them.

Of the others, she was not sure.

The bird cawed again, the harsh sound breaking the woman from her reverie. Her vampires had come to a stop up ahead. They looked like she felt, she thought with a stab of regret. These were her children. She had brought them into the world of undeath and now they were starving, homeless and stripped of their duties. It was no way to live. A few weeds and hardy scrubs clung to a measly existence in the gritty, rocky sand, but they looked much the worse for wear. Plants were supposed to be green, not grey. Even the desert rats seemed to avoid the place. Their musky smell had petered out as quickly as the gurgles of the Straits of Stars had come into earshot. The great river itself seemed polluted, and sick with poison.

They were truly in the land of the dead now.

An itch settled over her tongue, a slight burning sensation that made the ancient vampire frown. She scratched it against the roof of her mouth until the feeling subsided. The air here was polluted. She could smell the acrid tang of magic, feel it becoming stronger and more saturated the further north they went. It was a tickle against her flesh, an itch beneath her skin. This place was far flung from the opulent palaces of Lahmia, with its lush gardens and ancient houses of literature and law. It was fast becoming a barren wasteland, and it would only get worse the closer they came to Nagashizzar. It stood to reason.

This was the price to pay for the redemption offered by the Great Necromancer.

Stood apart from the other vampires was Issa. The Lahmian judge stared empty-eyed over the fast-flowing Straits of Stars, his mind off in some far-away place. It did not take a great deal of thought for Maatmeses to realise where it lay. Eshe, his Eshe, had not survived the sacking of Lahmia. The Nehekharans had murdered her as she fought to protect the courtrooms that had been at the centre of their existence. The High Justice saw the sorrow in his face as much as she felt it in his blood. The two had been devoted to each other, madly in love, from what she had been able to tell, and that was a rare thing, especially in such turbulent times.

A part of her rotted with guilt for her role in Eshe's demise, the putrid emotion worming its way into her insides. The courts had needed defending. It went against everything she stood for to leave the ancient centre of law and justice unprotected against the ravages of the ignorant Nehekharans, and Eshe had been amongst those designated to guard them. Her vampire son must have known she would not be coming back, thought Maatmeses, as she watched Issa remove something small from the strap at his waist. He must have realised that she would fight to the death to uphold the sanctity of the courts. He must

have known, when she turned from him for the last time and stalked off towards the courts, that he would never see her again.

Maatmeses admired such devotion, she realised with a twist in her gut. Envied it. Such immortal love was unheard of.

Dark memories swarmed up from the recesses of her mind, snatching at the opportunity to inflict more pain upon the ancient vampire. Men like Issa were all too few. She knew better than most the polygamous nature of man. They were fuelled by their insatiable lusts, easily the equal of even the most gluttonous vampire's blood-thirst. Once sacred, treasured even, by the High Justice, circumstance had marred the concept of marriage, scarring it, transforming it into cold, hard law in the eyes of the woman, and like all laws, when its sanctity was broken, the only answer was punishment. Her lips curled with a mixture of satisfaction and revulsion.

Law had always been her friend and ally. It was irrefutable in its truth, holding everything together from justice, to criminals, to punishment and crime. It had been the skeleton of Lahimia, the bones that had held the city together, just as it held marriage, property, authority and military might in check. Law encompassed justice, and vengeance.

Nothing was so important. Nothing.

Issa turned, slipping whatever it was he had been toying with back into his belt and rejoining his fellow vampires. It was time to move on, realised Maatmeses, stepping level with her offspring. The sooner they reached Nagashizzar, the better.

Far, far overhead, the lonely raven fell. It plummeted from the heavens, a dead weight, the noxious air having filled its lungs and stopped its heart. Such was the fate of all who breathed too long the vapours from the Straits of Stars. It was a fell omen, should any have chanced to look up and see it. They did not.

INVOCATION

The Next Issue

Released Friday 11nd December 2009

Part Two of the Artefacts of Death

Unit Design Rules

Vampire Painting Guide

The continuation of the Children of Maat

And much much more.....

I hope you have enjoyed this issue as much as we have enjoyed producing it. The legions of undead are always recruiting, so why not drop by Carpe Noctem and help plot the destruction of those who draw breath?

Link: www.vampirecounts.net

See you next time!

Disciple of Nagash